

RESOURCE:**WHAT TO DO, WHEN SOMEONE REFUSES RECONCILIATION*****If it is a person who does not share your Christian beliefs:***

Christians are commanded to seek peace and reconciliation with “everyone” (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18), not just Christians. However, non-Christians may not feel the same responsibility to live in reconciled relationships. If that occurs, you must “take what you are given.” Romans 12:18ff. gives you a lot of good ideas about how to stay gracious, kind, open, and cordial to persons who still are being standoffish to you.

If it is a Christian from your church:

Matthew 18 indicates that if a person will not reconcile after repeated skillful efforts on your part, you should go to stage B—getting some other Christian friends (preferably who are respected by the other person) to go along with you to reconcile the relationship. If that does not work, at stage C you “tell it to the church” and ask the elders to speak to the person.

If it is a Christian from some other church:

If the person you are seeking reconciliation with is a Christian but from another region or another church, you should use the Matthew 18:15ff process as far as you can. However, if you are not both members of the same church, it may not be possible to go to the final step of “telling it to the church.” Again, you may have to “take what you are given” and live as cordially and as graciously as possible with someone who is not reconciled to you.

General advice:

Learn to accept the apologies/repentances you get without demanding that people admit more than they honestly believe. If they repent pretty much as extensively as you feel they should, then the relationship can be almost what it was before. If they go only halfway, then you are better off, though the relationship is weakened because you still don’t fully trust their wisdom and self-knowledge.

It is usually harder to forgive someone who will not admit any wrong and who stays haughty. Internal forgiveness may be a longer process. Use all the spiritual resources we have in our faith:

Look at God’s commands to forgive. This is our obligation.

- Remember God’s forgiveness of us. We have no right to be bitter.
- Remember that God’s omniscience is necessary to be a just judge. We have insufficient knowledge to know what others deserve.
- Remember that we are being defeated by evil when we allow the evil to keep us in bondage through bitterness! (Romans 12 tells us to “overcome” or defeat evil with forgiveness.)
- Remember that we undermine the glory of the gospel in the world’s eyes when we fail to forgive.

Adapted from Tim Keller’s *Forgive*



FORGIVE