



AA Steps 8 & 9 - Amends

A SAMPLE "GO FORTH" INITIATIVE

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

-- Matthew 5:23-24

Are you still wondering why these two steps from the *The Twelve Steps* (or Twelve Traditions) in the book by Alcoholics Anonymous are included here?

Of course the Gospel basis for making amends includes the above instruction prioritizing reconciliation before worship, as well as Zacchaeus's example of making restitution in Luke 19:8, and the general principles of humility, apology, and seeking peace found in verses like Romans 12:18

Although the steps originated to help people with addiction, they are a Christian-based, structured approach to facing and overcoming unhealthy patterns and behaviors, making them beneficial for anyone looking for personal change, accountability and healing.

Step 8 - Make a list of all persons you have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.

This step is widely regarded as one of the most challenging steps in the 12-Step process because it requires a deep look at how your actions may have hurt others. It's difficult because it calls for accountability and complete honesty. Addictions, or even our cognitive biases can lead to behaviors that are out of character and harmful to loved ones. The purpose of this step is to begin taking responsibility for that harm and become willing to make things right.

Here are some steps to help guide you through Step 8:

- **Reflect honestly on past harm.** Think about the folks you have hurt. This can include family, friends, or even strangers. Focus on actions, behaviors and repercussions such as emotional, financial, or maybe even physical injury.
- **Write it down.** Make a list of those you've harmed. Be as thorough as possible. This list is for you only at this stage, so be honest without self-censorship.

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- **Discuss with a friend.** Review your list with a pastor, spiritual advisor or trusted friend. They can help you identify people you may have overlooked and prepare for making amends.
- **Become willing to make amends.** Step 8 is about preparing to make amends, even if you're not quite ready yet. Acknowledging your doubts, fears, or resistance, and working through them with your confidante can help you during this process.
- **Stay committed.** Completing Step 8 is an emotional milestone. Feelings of fear, guilt, or shame may come bubbling to the surface, but rest assured that's completely normal. Remind yourself often that you're taking a brave step toward healing.

Common Challenges in Step 8

Facing the harm you've caused isn't easy. You may find it overwhelming because you're tasked with being honest, humble, and vulnerable. It can take a great deal of humility to apologize to those whom you've wronged.

Some common challenges with completing this step include:

- Fear of rejection or anger from those you've hurt.
- Doubts about whether an apology is enough to repair the damage.
- Shame or guilt that makes it hard to revisit past actions.
- Uncertainty about how to approach the conversation or what to say.

Keep in mind that everyone's situation is different, but approaching someone, offering a sincere apology, and showing commitment to repairing one's relationship can be an important first step.

Think of this step as the beginning of a new journey, one in which you will work to repair and rekindle connections with the people God has placed in your life.

Step 9 - Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

This step requires one to be willing to go to any lengths to make amends, provided those efforts don't end up causing somebody new or additional harm. Making amends must involve sincere efforts to apologize. The notion of being sincere involves adopting the right attitude before making an approach. You may need to forgive yourself, and forgive people for actions done in retaliation. Make sure your plan does not include assigning blame and allows the person who has been hurt the freedom to respond, even if the response is angry or unforgiving.



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The guiding principal of Step 9 is to make full amends at the earliest opportunity, as long as such action is feasible, proper, and will not cause additional harm. To accomplish that, you may find it easier to break down what you need to make amends for into categories:

- People you will make full amends to.
- People you will make partial amends to, because full restitution would cause more harm than good.
- People you should not contact until you're completely ready. This might include a child who could be disappointed if you mishandle the process.
- People you can't directly make amends to, such as a person who is in an unknown location or has passed away. Note: You can still pray for those people.

When we can be accountable and make amends, we are faced with our human imperfections. Our fallibility. It can be painful, but it encourages us to understand ourselves more deeply and hold ourselves with compassion. It helps us learn from the experience and spiritually grow - in all of our relationships and our capacity to love others.