

# RESTITUTION

At the recent fundraising dinner in church, my family members met up with a lot of friends - some of them whom they had not seen over the years. As my mother-in-law remarked, such reunions happen only in two situations - a happy event such as a wedding or a somber event like a funeral.



My husband whispered to me that he was not even close to any of them in the first place as he was never one of the popular kids (with his quiet nature, I can see why). I laughed in response but at that point, a thought came to my mind. There are various reasons behind why people grow apart. Busy lives, overseas work commitment...etc... and sometimes, we even allow certain friendships to unravel over time. How and why did we even allow that to happen?

Let us examine this hypothetical case.

Sara loved her new bag. She could not wait to show it off to her friend Liba. The two decided to meet for lunch. Both cooed and ahhed over the new bag. Liba asked to borrow it for her upcoming party. Sara hesitated but agreed since she decided that a friend should be more valuable than a favoured object of hers. However, her heart sunk when she saw the state of her bag when it was returned to her. There was a stain on it! Liba shrugged and apologised. Sara nodded her head but things were never the same between them. Sara felt Liba had *taken advantage* of her. Liba thought Sara had *over-reacted* over a bag. After all, she HAD apologised so Sara should have just forgiven her.



What would have happened if Liba had offered to replace the bag...or even add in a little gift to apologise? Would Sara be appeased?



## What does the Bible say?

When God gave Moses the Law, he instituted a system of restitution:

### **Numbers 5:5-7**

*5 The Lord said to Moses, 6 "Say to the Israelites: 'Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord is guilty 7 and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged.*

Anyone who injured another paid the price for what was stolen or destroyed and added 20% to the value. Restitution is making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen, paying debts, making confessions to the offended and apologising to those slandered so as to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. It is the act of putting right what has been wrongly done. It is returning what has been forcefully or deceitfully acquired. It is giving equivalent compensation for loss or pains inflicted on others.

We may think of restitution as justice for the wronged party and punishment for the offender but do you know that restitution offers more? It builds a bridge



between two parties, paving the way for relationships to be restored. Forgiveness coupled with responsibility towards the other person are keys to restoring relationships. Restitution was practiced in the days of our Lord Jesus and that of the Apostles. It is required to be observed in our days too. After all, in Matthew 5:23-24 *"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."*

Restitution is not always comfortable but it is the right thing to do.

I am sure that something of a similar context has happened to anyone of us at some point of our lives. If you have felt taken advantage of, maybe it is time to engage someone in conversation instead of detaching from that relationship. If you have unintentionally mistreated a friend, consider what needs to be done and take action to restore the relationship. Do it because it pleases God and also, your relationships will be much richer for it.

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