

Reach for Recovery¹

Part 2: Mirror – Mirror on the Wall

By Moe & Paige Becnel

This month, we continue with Part 2 of our *Reach for Recovery*¹ series. There are remarried spouses and children that are struggling to make their life and family a success. Often, a part of the struggle is that family members are carrying hurts, failures, disappointments, negative feelings, bitterness, unforgiveness, negative attitudes, and/ or bad habits from their past --- into their present.

Today we want to help you take a real *look at yourself*, to identify any negative behaviors that you may have that have caused any previous relationships to fail. This process is painful, but necessary so that you will have success in your future relationships.

We are NOT attempting to place 100% blame on you for your previous failed relationship(s). Yet, it is necessary for you to determine any negative effect your actions or reactions may have had on your relationship(s).

Our Experience

Moe experienced separation and divorce when his wife left him in 1987. He wanted no part of the divorce, and tried to reconcile over the next several months to save his marriage and family. As he shared his situation with others, he repeatedly told people, “*My wife left me!” “My wife left me!” “My wife left me!”*

One day while in prayer, God uttered these words to his thoughts, “*Yes, your wife left you, but you are the one who made her want to leave.*” Ouch! That really hurt, because he did not realize the damage, or the extent of the damage that he had done to the relationship --- partially causing it to fail.

We believe MOST relationships fail due to inappropriate behaviors, actions, words, or reactions by both parties.

Snow White’s Mirror

In the fable of Snow White, we hear the wicked queen repeatedly ask the mirror, “Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?” When the mirror would answer, “Snow White!”, the queen would get angry. She was looking at her own reflection, but not accepting the truth that it foretold. The queen could not see her own faults; she only saw Snow White as a competitor who was stealing her glory. Her response was to try to remove Snow White from her life, rather than to determine why she was not the fairest.

As humans, we have the same tendencies! We point fingers at others. We blame others for our failures. We want to remove people who have hurt us from our life. In Genesis 3: 6-13, we read the account of Adam and Eve disobeying God’s command to not eat fruit from a certain tree. In verses 12-13, we see Adam blaming God for giving him Eve, Adam blaming Eve for disobeying, and Eve blaming the serpent for deceiving her. BLAME – BLAME – BLAME!

In Matthew 7:3-5 Jesus says, “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Failing to look at yourself will cause additional failures in your relationships. Pointing a finger at others keeps you from evaluating your own internal shortcomings. We evaluate and criticize others in an effort to avoid evaluating ourselves.

Self-Examination Process

Let's go through the following process of self-evaluation:

I. Identify Your Shortcomings

In Psalm 139: 23-24, King David who was highly favored of God wrote, *"Search me O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life."* WOW! That is a bold prayer of self-examination. David asked God to "show him", because he knew he may be unaware of his own faults, just as the queen in Snow White, and Adam & Eve were unaware of their own faults.

Self-inventory is tough, because the truth often hurts. But it is necessary so that you identify and stop negative behaviors and attitudes that hurt others and damage relationships. Are you willing? Say, "YES!"

OK, ask yourself these questions – ponder each question, and BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF & GOD (God already knows the answers):

1. Was God at the center of your marriage? (Psalm 127: 1 reads, *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it..."*)
2. What makes you truly happy?
3. What makes you unhappy?
4. Are you difficult to please? (wanting things your way, wanting more material possessions, other people's decisions are always wrong to you, you would rather do things yourself, etc.)
5. Do you criticize others? Did you criticize your former spouse? (A critical attitude will affect every person in your life.)
6. Did you gossip about your former spouse to others, complaining about him or her?
7. Did you try to change your former spouse? (Only God can change the heart of a man or woman – I'm sure you know that by now.)
8. Are you easily angered?
9. Have you used anger, pouting or stubbornness to get people to do what you want? (This is manipulation.)
10. Who was your best friend in your former marriage – spouse, parent or other friend? (Your spouse needs to be your best friend.)
11. Were you more devoted to others (including your children), to a career, or to a hobby - than to your former spouse?
12. Were you unfaithful to your former spouse? (adultery, pornography, etc.)
13. Were you verbally abusive to your former spouse, putting them down instead of lifting them up?
14. Were you physically abusive to your former spouse?
15. How did you handle a bad decision made by your former spouse – emotionally or prayerfully? (Every person on earth will make mistakes.)
16. Were you a financial burden (excessive spender) or blessing (contributor) to your former marriage?
17. Did your former spouse not meet your expectations? (When you expect things from others, you set yourself up for disappointment. Set others free from your expectations, and let God to be your provider!)
18. Did you serve your former spouse and family, or your own interests and wants?
19. Can you truly forgive someone who hurt or offended you? (Forgiveness is vital to all life-long relationships. God requires us to forgive others.)
20. Pray Psalm 139: 23-24 that David prayed, asking God to show you any other areas that you may have missed.
21. Do you possess the characteristics of Jesus Christ?
(Galatians 5: 22 --- Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering = Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control) Which do you lack the most?

II. Repent of Your Shortcomings

Now that you have identified some shortcomings in yourself, do not feel defeated or guilty. Some of your negative attitudes, harmful personality traits, and bad habits may stem back to your parents, your home environment, or an experience you had when you were growing up.

Repent means, "turn away". NEVER SAY, "That's just the way I am." You can change, and you need to change so you will have successful relationships.

1. Accept responsibility for your part of the damage done to your former marriage. No more finger-pointing.
2. Ask God to forgive you for damaging your former marriage relationship.
1John 1: 9 says, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"
3. Now that God has forgiven you, forgive yourself. Romans 8: 1 says, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*" Do not live under guilt. Guilt is not from God.
4. Forgive your former spouse for the part he or she played in causing the relationship to fail.
5. Commit to God, and your new spouse, to make positive change in your heart and your actions. Stop doing those things you identified that damage relationships.
6. Purpose in your heart that your new marriage will last a lifetime! Never give up! Never Quit!

III. Look Forward

God has a plan for you and your new family.

Jeremiah 29: 11 reads, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*"

You have had a failure --- You are not a failure!

God is not mad at you! God forgives and forgets! If you have truly repented, your slate is clean!

God loves you and your new family, and wants it to last a lifetime.

You get a "do-over" --- a "mulligan" in the game of real life!

God's plan allows you to be a victor, not a victim!

Go forth in God!!!

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¹Reach for Recovery

Moe & Paige Becnel have organized, written parts, and teach parts of *Reach for Recovery*, a divorce recovery program at Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, LA. *Reach for Recovery* is designed to guide people who have experienced divorce through the emotional pain of a broken relationship, to identify mistakes that we make in relationships, and to teach Godly relationship principles.

If you did not attend a divorce recovery program before you remarried, this series of articles provides you a chance to learn and apply some key principles from *Reach for Recovery* that will help you to make your new relationships successful.