

# Restorative Justice: Ecclesial Roots, Ecclesial Applications

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**Intro:** The cross-fertilization of Biblical traditions and Restorative Justice movement.

**Story** of a Basic Victim/Offender Resolution Process

Key emphasis: Recognizing the similar language of Healing and Formation Journeys through relational supports; helping people to move forward from the past to the future.

## I. Ecclesial Roots of Restorative Justice

A. Overview:

1. Mennonite Beginnings (1970s)
2. Indigenous Models Resonate (1980s)
3. Government/School Support Strengthens (1990s)
4. Applications Beyond Criminal Realm Broaden (2000s)

B. Touchpoints with Biblical and Anabaptist traditions:

1. Vision of shalom and the call to peacemaking
2. Righteousness and Justice as relational categories
3. Leaving vengeance to God; modeling the Lamb
4. Community-based justice and resolution processes

**Exercise:** If you were a victim of... What would you experience? What would you want?

**PowerPoint:** Basic Concepts for Restorative Justice and Conflict Transformation

## II. Theological Engagement with Restorative Justice

- A. RJ Informing Theological Development: Example of Atonement studies (not the only new influence: consider Girard's influence on atonement views)
- B. Theological Study Informing RJ practice: Example of South Africa's T&R Commission (not the only new influence: consider how indigenous traditions are shaping the movement, i.e. circle processes)

### III. Ecclesial Applications of Restorative Justice

#### A. **Outwardly** (Church to the World)

1. Supporting new programs in annual budget
2. Providing volunteerism for community-based programs
3. Starting church-based ministries (in prisons; with victims or offenders)

***But as a distinct community of people, what are churches modeling to the world?***

#### B. **Inwardly** (Church Relational Dynamics)

1. Building healthy cultures of apology and forgiveness
2. Dealing with unexpected trauma that affects the group
3. Providing third-party helpers, both from within and without

### **The Importance of Recognizing Three Continuums Re: Resolution Processes:**

- the ***Prevention – Intervention – Post-Incident Continuum***
- the ***Harm – Conflict – Dispute Continuum***
- the ***Mature Vulnerability – Guarded Vulnerability Continuum***

4. Supporting everyone's HEALING and FORMATION Journeys
  - a. Addressing the Inner Victim: our wounded self
  - b. Addressing the Inner Offender: our wounding self

**Exercise:** Finding ourselves in the story of Hagar

**Examples of victim/offender aspects enmeshment within one person.**

### **Conclusions:**

Theological: Consideration of how Jesus' ministry *and* Jesus' atonement by his death/resurrection (= reconciliation) address *both* our victim and offender sides: our woundingness (sins) and our woundedness (sinned-uponness). The Sin-Bearer forgives both aspects and redeems us from both. Restoration is for the whole person.

Ecclesial Practices: Ministries of Reconciliation not just outwardly in society but also inwardly for congregational healing and congregational formation (alongside individual healing and formation). Restoration is for the whole church group.

**Final thought: Kenosis and Theosis (formation into God's character) as involving the duet of Vulnerability and Responsibility**