

12 November 2020

Dear Forgiveness Friends:

It is encouraging to know I am not alone needing help learning and practicing Forgiveness. Thanks for joining me.

1. It is by divine grace (power) that God first shows us that He has made us to be instruments of forgiving love. God equips us to become who it is each of us have been created to be.
2. Forgiveness may be the most difficult of Jesus' teachings. It is right there in the very heart of the prayer He tells us to make our own: "Forgive us our trespasses (sins) and we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us."
3. The pain others cause us by their insensitivity, offense and cruelty is real. So, too, are the negative effects of unforgiveness which will harden our hearts if we do not learn and practice Forgiveness.
4. Forgiveness never makes a wrong, right. The offence done to me *was wrong, is wrong* and *always will be wrong*. And it can be forgiven.



I have found the distinction made between excusing and forgiving by the 20th century Christian writer C.S. Lewis very helpful.

Forgiving does not mean excusing. Many people seem to think it does. They think that if you ask them to forgive someone who has cheated or bullied them you are trying to make out that there was really no cheating or bullying. But if that were so, there would be nothing to forgive. This doesn't mean that you must necessarily believe his next promise. It does mean that you must make every effort to kill every taste of resentment in your own heart - every wish to humiliate or hurt him or to pay him out.

According to Lewis, *being a Christian means forgiving the inexcusable*.

Two obstacles make forgiveness especially difficult.

- a) One roadblock to forgiving is misunderstanding what it really is. For example, I continue to hear people opine, “forgive and forget.” While this may be a common encouragement, it is not biblical but instead a line from Shakespeare’s “King Lear.”

To forget a serious offence is not possible and we are not supposed to forget.

The biblical teaching on forgiveness rightly can be phrased as, “remember and forgive.” That is, (first) *remember* God’s mercy lavished upon us so that we can (second) *forgive* someone for their offense to us. This is at the center of Jesus’ parable about the unforgiving debtor (Matthew 18:23-35). In this story, the debtor who was forgiven an enormous debt later refuses to forgive someone who owed him a far smaller amount. The unforgiving debtor is punished for not remembering how he first had been forgiven and, in turn, for not forgiving one who owed him a small amount.

- b) A second obstacle to forgiveness is think that forgiveness means that I have to be reconciled with the offender. While we might be reconciled with the offender, in some instances it is not possible.

Forgiveness is the work we do with and for ourselves, always with God’s help (grace), to be released from the anguish that binds us to the offender. Our inner work to be freed from the offender’s tyranny does not depend on whether or not the offender acknowledges the offence or seeks reconciliation.

Commit to practice the 5 biblical-steps of Forgiveness *daily*. Select one individual or group who has offended and hurt you and practice Forgiveness. And I will do the same.

<https://littleflowertoledo.org/get-involved/forgiveness>

In Christ Jesus, the Risen Lord,

Father Dave