
Forgiving

The Bible teaches us about the need to not only practice asking God to forgive us when we have erred, but even when others have offended us.

According to Microsoft Encarta (2005), forgiveness means “to excuse somebody for a mistake, misunderstanding, wrongdoing, or an inappropriateness”. Jesus, Himself, gave an excellent demonstration of this on the cross, where He prayed for those who had crucified him with two criminals by saying, “Forgive them Lord, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34). So in spite of the fact that they spat on him, mocked Him, and killed him, Jesus still found it possible to forgive because of the abundance of love that God has for everyone.

In a similar way, because of the abundance of love that God has for us, God expects us to share this love with others, and so we too should be willing to forgive others, based on the standards that God has set for us. This we see stipulated in Matthew 18:21-22, when Jesus in responding to Peter about how many times he should forgive someone said, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” In saying this, Jesus does not mean that we should be literally counting the number of times some one offends us, but rather that we should seek to forgive others indefinitely. You see, seven is a number in the Bible which denotes perfection, and so in having such a

number as a multiple of ten (70), then further multiplying again by that number, is simply saying that Jesus wants us to always forgive others, in spite of the hurt, regret or ill feelings which may characterize the situation and or individual. We are therefore challenged by God to forgive not out of our own personal ego and desires, but because of the love that we should have for everyone, including our offenders who are still our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is therefore out of this love that we should find it in our hearts to forgive those who have offended us.

Forgiving and Forgetting

Is it really possible to forget the evil or wrong that others have done to us? Is this really possible? Can we truly forgive and forget what such persons have done to us? In examining this concept, let us first bear in mind the notion, that the phrase “forgive and forget” is not in the Bible. This concept is therefore flawed, because we are not like programmable computers, which once the delete button is pressed, then it is permanently removed from memory. As human beings, we will remember the wrong that others have done to us, and so the Christian’s response to forgive others requires one of maturity, grounded in the love that we have for Christ Jesus.

In fact, Microsoft Encarta 2005, also defines forgiveness as “to stop being angry about or resenting somebody or somebody’s behavior.” This therefore affirms the fact that forgiveness is not only to say “I forgive you!” with our lips, but rather, it is a response via a positive change of our attitudes, towards those who have sinned against us. It is not that we

may forget about it, but rather, it is associated with a willingness and determination to move on with our lives, and place the situation in God’s hands.

We will never forget the situation/event, but when we have genuinely forgiven someone who has erred us, then it means that we do not hold it as a grudge against them, and so we would be able to talk with each other, as if nothing had gone wrong before. However, this may be more easily said than done, as depending on the nature of the situation, some wounds may take a longer time to heal than others. It may take time to rebuild trust and confidence, and it may even result in a change of the nature of how you see/view each other. This however is often times associated with the hurt which may come as a result of the person erring you.

Forgiving and letting go

As a result drastic actions may need to be taken in order to heal yourself of this hurt, in order to facilitate you forgiving this person. Even though you may never be able to forget the event which happened, with God’s help you can get to the place in your life where you have let go of the problem, and allow God to take control. In fact on page 125 under The Greeting of Peace in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1993), Matthew 5:23-24 tells us that “If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.” This therefore teaches us, that it is always