



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Forgiveness

It is said that "to err is human; to forgive, divine". Most of us are familiar with the "err" side of humanity ... ours and others. We fail and hurt others. Others fail and hurt us. Each hurt creates debt to the wounded party, debt for which there often is no possible sufficient payment. As a result, some of us strike back and seek revenge. Others of us pursue legal justice in hopes of "balancing the books". But balanced books can not heal wounded hearts and spirits, and often only continues the pain cycle. What then are we to do with injury debt?

Enter forgiveness ... the consciously chosen, undeserved, active cancelling of injury debt designed to free the forgiver from the bitterness, resentment, and control of the past. Truly, forgiveness has divine qualities. Yet, it is often summarily dismissed as too idealistic, too difficult, too dangerous, or too unfair. As a result, we hang on to our wounds and either pretend they don't exist (until we slip in our own emotional blood), or allow them to weigh us down and rob us of our peace and joy.

Sadly, the healing, redemptive nature of forgiveness is often misunderstood. To better grasp what forgiveness is,

let's consider for a few moments what it isn't. Forgiveness is **not**:

1) Forgetting - If we forget, there is nothing to forgive. We forgive what we remember. The forgiving frees us to eventually forget if we so choose.

2) Excusing - There is no need to forgive those who are not to blame. We forgive those who are responsible for the wounding done.

3) Acceptance - We accept people and behavior we consider good and healthy. We forgive people for the hurtful things they do/did to us.

4) Tolerance - We don't have to tolerate the hurtful things people do just because we forgive them. Change can be expected. Consequences occur. We need not assume (or pretend) that everything is "back to normal" just because we forgive.

5) Weakness - It takes strength to let go of justice, reject revenge, and pursue the path of true forgiveness. Remember, there is no such thing as cheap forgiveness. It's a process, not an act. As such, it takes time, intentionality, and effort.

So what's involved in this forgiveness process?

First, we emotionally hurt. Someone has injured us, intentionally or not, and we feel it. In order to

forgive, we must know our wound and what specifically we are forgiving.

Second, we identify the source of the hurt. Assumptions and knee-jerk conclusions can mislead and should give way to wise, careful considerations.

Third, we experience the wide variety of anger emotions that call for justice, revenge, and the reestablishment of our value and pride. The longer these feelings persist, the more sick we become - emotionally, spiritually, even physically.

Fourth, we decide we don't want to live in sickness. We choose to see the wounding party as needy, hurt, ignorant, weak, broken, scared ... rather than bad.

Fifth, we choose to wash them in grace, cancelling their debt, and removing the debt bond that connected them to us. Now, rather than viewing them as enemies, we can wish them well. Rather than being held in the grip of painful re-runs of the past, we can focus our energy on claiming the joy of the present and the promise of the future.

Is forgiveness fair? Of course not! That's the beauty of it. It steps beyond fairness to promote health, strength, joy, and a life guided by humble significance and pervasive love. There's no way fairness could do all that!

So forgive ... be free ... and flourish!



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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Spirituality and Forgiveness

"...to forgive [is] divine." Indeed! We offend; in His grace, God forgives His children. Yet, we have the privilege of sharing in this divinely-established activity. Divinely-established? Yes! Before mankind, the earth knew no sin. Before sin, there was no need for forgiveness. But God established a way.

It has been said that "love is the power behind forgiveness." This makes some sense, since God is the essence of love. Yet, while love is important, we need more than love to engage in true forgiveness. Consider these few additions.

- 1) We must release our pride and self-righteousness, recognizing our own failures and need for forgiveness. This softens our heart and moves us from the position of self-appointed judge.
- 2) We must get beyond our self and our "rights", care about others, and desire to improve the situation.
- 3) We must believe and trust that God has our best interests at heart when He calls us to forgive, and so avoid the sickness associated with our anger, resentment, bitterness, and hatred.

How can we do all this? By the power of God's Spirit within us. Christ has shown the way. We now are free to follow in His steps.



"When you pray for anyone, you tend to modify your personal attitude toward him"
- Norman Vincent Peale