

Forgiveness - A Short Reflection

Forgiveness is at the very heart of the Gospel. The forgiveness of God through the cross of Christ urges us, as his disciples, to ask for forgiveness whenever it is needed and to forgive others when they wrong us.

The gospel story this week (Matthew 18:21-35) tell us that God is always ready and willing to forgive, even our most serious offences. If this is the behaviour of our God, we do not have any excuse to deny anyone our forgiveness.

But it can be hard knowing how to forgive. When someone does or says something which causes us pain and distress it can be difficult to come to terms with the hurt we feel. Yet storing up resentment in our hearts can affect our relationships and create destructive patterns. Beginning to recognise and accept our own feelings can open a door to forgiveness and new life.

So what might help us to come to a place of forgiveness? Here's some suggestions:

- Try seeing the situation from the other person's point of view.
- Reflect on why they may have behaved in the way they did. Perhaps you would have reacted in the same way if you faced the same situation.
- Pray to God to help you to forgive. You might like to write in a journal, or use a guided meditation to help you.
- Talk with someone you trust and have found to be wise and compassionate.
- Be aware that forgiveness is a process, and even small hurts may need to be revisited and forgiven over and over again.

Learning to forgive does not come effortlessly: it comes from growing in understanding and maturity as a Christian. It's not always easy to forgive someone, which is why we need to see them with the eyes of God. It's why we must learn to be guided by the Holy Spirit as it makes us into what we are called to be.

The German Art historian Jean Paul Richter wrote these perceptive words:
'Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness or else forgiving another.'

When we make the decision to forgive, we not only change ourselves but we change the world for the better. This is how we can demonstrate the message of Jesus into our daily lives.

Forgiveness.

Is the mightiest sword.

Forgiveness of those you fear.

Is the highest reward.

When they bruise you with words.

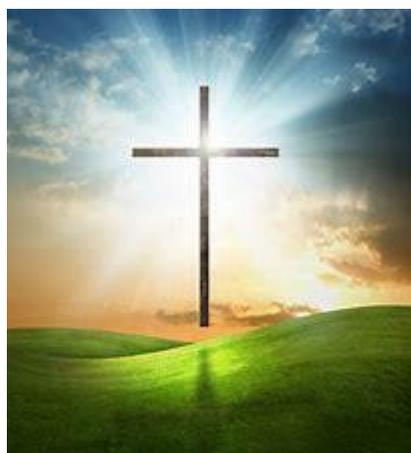
When they make you feel small.

When it's hardest to take.

You must do nothing at all.....

From Jane Eyre

As Christian we know that we have been forgiven. Christ's forgiveness inspires and compels us to forgive. It's both a privilege and a challenge to follow the example of Christ: forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven us (Colossians 3: 13). But when we find it hard, God's grace helps us in our weakness and we can depend on the sufficiency of God's grace to forgive whenever it is necessary.



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