

# Forgiveness

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It is one thing to understand biblical forgiveness and quite another to actually truly live it out in our lives day-by-day. *That* is the hard part for humans.

I like to think about forgiveness as having reciprocity in two directions... the opportunity to offer or give forgiveness in one direction and then the ability to receive forgiveness in the other. Each is the full complement of the other and both essential to realize true forgiveness. To forgive someone surely requires only the graciousness of the giver, as with our Father freely forgiving us. But to *receive* forgiveness may not be quite so easy. *That* is the hard part for humans.

Ponder these sequential steps necessary for the process of receiving forgiveness:

1. **Acknowledge the Sin** (confess, admit, take responsibility)
2. **Apologize for Wrongdoing** (express regret, sorrow, sympathy for the pain caused)
3. **Ask for Forgiveness** (humble yourself)
4. **Repent** (turn back to the ways of the Lord, thereby striving not to re-offend)
5. **Receive Forgiveness** (only through the grace of the one offering the forgiveness)

Precedent for these steps is certainly demonstrated in our ritualistic worship of our Christ, when weekly we are absolved following our public confession of sin and request to Him for forgiveness. Only He can wipe our sins away, washing us clean!

Then, to accentuate this point, if you look to the ultimate example of forgiveness, the one required in exchange for the gift of living with our God in Heaven for eternity, our salvation, it is clearly laid out for us there too. Consider this... to be given salvation we are required to acknowledge, essentially believe, that Jesus is our Savior... but, Savior from what? Sin, of course! We have to admit sin in order for Him to save us from it! Therefore as an acknowledged sinner, we ask for forgiveness from our Lord and through His grace we receive salvation... everlasting life... the *ultimate* forgiveness. Apparently those steps to *receive* forgiveness are required!

Now back to human-to-human terms... if acknowledgement of wrongdoing and apology isn't given, then although forgiveness may be offered, it can't truly be received. Surely it is far easier to shift the blame to others, ducking responsibility. Often times both parties share in the blame for wrongdoing... and sometimes not. But to ignore or not accept ownership for commission of sin is very destructive. *That*, too often, is the easy part for humans.

A lack of ability to apologize is extremely detrimental to human relationships, causing much pain and suffering, encouraging the inability to trust, and causing a tremendous lack of respect. Why would anyone wish to cause that for another, *especially* those we truly care about? All can be remedied by taking responsibility for the wrong, humbly apologizing and then asking for forgiveness. This allows an opportunity for the damaged relationship to be restored.

However, even if forgiveness is offered and received, it still doesn't release the offender of moral responsibility. Consequences for the offense may still exist, from loss of a friendship on one end, to jail time, in the extreme! This is why it is always best to try to avoid the bad behavior in the first place. But herein lies our human frailty. No one but He is without sin.

Finally, I think it is very important to understand the process of forgiveness and *do our very best to emulate it*, because we are teachers. The little ones are watching, and listening, and paying close attention at every turn. If we expect children, or grandchildren, to recognize their misdeeds and apologize in order to receive *our* forgiveness, then surely we should have the same expectation for ourselves when we behave badly. Boy, is that common sense?! I suppose the more common sense it is, the more complicated it seems, sometimes. *That*, indeed, is the hard part for humans.

Surely, through the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ, He empowers us to earnestly seek forgiveness when required and graciously give it when humbly requested. He makes the hard part much easier for humans!