

## **Forgiveness: Easier Said Than Done**

Forgiving those who have wronged you is hard. The reasons for this are plenty. One reason we struggle forgiving is because we feel as if, by doing so, we are approving of those hurtful actions. Another reason we struggle with forgiving is because we are afraid of being vulnerable and possibly being hurt again. Sometimes, we avoid forgiveness, because cutting ties or walking away from a relationship takes less effort. Lastly, many of us simply don't know how to truly forgive.

In writing to the believers in Corinth, Paul reminds them that their responsibility to love, serve, and forgive is ultimately rooted in their new transformed relationship with Jesus: "... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Believers are "in Christ." Our identity has been so radically changed that it has turned our relationship to others on its head. It is **His** lavish love (1 Jn 4:19), **His** sacrificial service (Mk 10:45), and **His** perfect forgiveness (Eph 4:32) that must become our constant motivation to put the one-anothers into practice.

However, all three of these "community graces" are difficult even for believers to put into practice, because they demand mortifying the flesh and living by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:13). Only born-again believers can fully fathom what true love, servitude, and forgiveness mean and how they are practiced, because they have experienced these graces personally. Even so, it involves a constant surrendering of our natural inclination to retaliate and the need of trusting God to be just. For further study, meditate on these verses for biblical guidance on forgiveness: Matt 5:21-22; Psalm 51:4; Matt 18:31; Matt 5:23-24; Rom 12:14, 19.

It has been said, "Do only what is required of you and remain a slave. Do more than is required and become free." Our natural tendency is to hold others captive in their sin by avoiding the painful but necessary transaction that leads to reconciliation. In doing so, we imprison ourselves! Consider allowing the Word of God to remind you of Christ's radical forgiveness and permit the Holy Spirit to press you beyond your fear and pride. Free both yourself and others held captive by the shackles of bitterness and unforgiveness.

***Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV) - "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."***