

Forgiveness or Moral Numbness? The Case of New York's Weiner

With the latest revelation of Anthony Weiner's adolescent, sewer-type behavior, many in the mainstream media are saying New Yorkers are a forgiving people.

But are they really forgiving? Or are they only relieved that some public figure is reflecting their sordid life and culture?

Do Americans at large even know what forgiveness means anymore? Or is their thinking so muddled that they confuse forgiveness with acquiescence and approval?

I'm certain that decent people in New York, like decent people across America, are deeply grieved over the moral sliminess of not just Mr. Weiner, but also an electorate that would consider voting for such folks.

Thoughtful people of all religious stripes know that forgiveness doesn't require only repentance, but also restitution. In both Judaism and Christianity, forgiveness of sin doesn't mean the sinner gets off scot-free. Someone has to pay for sin. And sin comes with a steep price.

In Judaism, the Old Testament requirement for a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin was not only mandatory, but it was a pertinent reminder that, first and foremost, all sin was an offense to a holy God. Thus, the Scripture goes into much detail to prescribe certain sacrifices.

In the New Testament, God the Son—the sinless, holy God—paid the ultimate sacrifice on a sinner's cross. He serves as payment on behalf of every repentant sinner who turns to

Him in utter humility to accept that sacrifice. Whenever Christians sin, they grieve deeply, knowing Christ paid so dearly for that sin.

In either case, God wants His creation to know sin is highly offensive to Him.

Tragically, however, our culture, and even many churches, have made light of the enormity of sin and the hefty price of repentance needed to elicit forgiveness.

That flippant approach to sin and forgiveness is caught as well as taught. Is anyone surprised Bill and Hillary Clinton were mentors of the Weiners?

But I don't want to focus so much on the Weiners or the Clintons and their sordid lives. Instead, I stand with millions of others who mourn over what has happened to our culture—a culture that has tossed its moral compass into the deep sea, a culture that winks at immorality as it sails adrift on an ocean of relativism. It appears that with every succeeding generation, abhorrent behavior becomes more brazen.

No wonder there is so much confusion between forgiveness and acquiescence.

I don't write this from a "holier than thou" attitude. Rather, I am a sinner who has experienced the grief and pain of repentance. And each time, I have endeavored to produce the fruit of restitution; I have endeavored to hold fast to the truth of Christ's sacrifice and how I must respond.

But our culture has tragically bought into the "greatest lie" (read more in my book by the same title). Simply put, the greatest lie is that God does not judge or condemn anyone and that everyone will go to heaven when they die.

God has clearly declared He is innocent of such false magnanimity—a mistaken belief that will cause many to weep

blood for eternity. That should make every thoughtful person do what the prophet Jeremiah of old did—namely, weep real tears for our country.

We must plead with God for a spiritual awakening—first in the church, and then in the culture at large.

Michael Youssef, Ph.D., is the founder and president of *Leading the Way With Dr. Michael Youssef*, a worldwide ministry that leads the way for people living in spiritual darkness to discover the light of Christ through the creative use of media and on-the-ground ministry teams. Youssef was born in Egypt.