

Why Forgiveness May Be the Most Misunderstood Quality in Our Culture

Forgiveness may be the most misused, misapplied and misunderstood quality in our culture. We think we know what forgiveness is all about, but we really don't.

Before reading further, take a minute to do this little quiz by deciding if each statement is true or false:

1. A person should not be forgiven until he asks for it.
2. Forgiving includes minimizing the offense and the pain caused.
3. Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship.
4. You haven't really forgiven until you've forgotten the offense.
5. When you see somebody hurt, it is your duty to forgive the offender.

When you read the Bible and see what God has to say about forgiveness, you discover that all five of those statements are false. How did you do?

We're going to spend the next few days looking at what forgiveness really is, because most people don't understand forgiveness.

First, real forgiveness is unconditional. There's no attachment to it. You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. You don't bargain for it. Forgiveness is not based on a promise never to do it again. You offer it to somebody whether they

ask for it or not.

When Jesus stretched out His hands on the cross and said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"* nobody had asked for it (Luke 23:34, MEV). Nobody had said, "Please forgive me, Jesus, for what we're doing to You." He just offered it. He took the initiative.

Second, forgiveness isn't minimizing the seriousness of the offense. When somebody asks for your forgiveness and you say, "It's no big deal. It really didn't hurt," that actually cheapens forgiveness. If it wasn't a big deal, you don't need forgiveness and you don't need to offer it.

Forgiveness is only for the big stuff. You don't use it for slights that are just minor issues. If something really requires forgiveness, then you should not minimize it when somebody asks you for forgiveness. You shouldn't say it wasn't a big deal. It was a big deal! If it wasn't a big deal, just say, "You don't need to ask forgiveness." But if it *is* a big deal, then you need to admit it.

There are a lot of big deals in life. Have you noticed that? But there is a difference in being wounded and being wronged. Being wounded requires patience and acceptance, not forgiveness, because the person did it unintentionally. Being wronged requires forgiveness.

Remember, God will give you the grace to forgive as you walk in faith with Him.

Talk It Over

- What are the wounds that you've been waiting for someone to apologize for but that you just need to accept?
- Why is it so hard to offer forgiveness to someone who has not asked for it? How can you move past this?
- How does your attitude on forgiveness change when you consider how Christ forgave you? {eoa}

Rick Warren is the founding pastor of Saddleback Church. His book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, was named one of the 100 Christian books that changed the 20th century. He is also founder of [The Pastor's Circle](#), a global internet community for pastors.

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