

Forgiveness

Headline: Jesus said: 'You have to forgive if you want to be forgiven.'

Objective: So that's it? This very day you may be faced with this question, your child disobeyed a rule, your coworker falsely accused you, your employee was found to have stolen from the company. What do we need to know about scripture and the Church teaching on forgiveness?
In this topic we will be reminded of perspectives on forgiveness we may not have considered.

Song Suggestion: Come Holy Ghost

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Matt 6:12

In the Our Father we say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"

Matt 6:14-15

Immediately after teaching the Our Father Jesus then said "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"

Catechism 2843

Thus, the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, becomes a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." It is there, in fact, "in the depths of the heart," that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

Catechism 1448

..... It comprises two equally essential elements: on the one hand, acts of the man who undergoes conversion through the action of the Holy Spirit: namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction; on the other, God's action through the intervention of the Church....who through the bishop and priests forgives sin in the name of Jesus Christ, determines the satisfaction and also prays for the sinner.

The Church acknowledges this principle. In his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, John Paul II notes that the "requirement of forgiveness does not cancel out the objective requirements of justice. In no passage of the gospel message does forgiveness, or mercy as its source, mean indulgence toward evil, toward scandals, toward injury or insult. In any case, reparation for evil and scandal, compensation for injury, and satisfaction for insult are conditions for forgiveness"

Saint: Padre Pio-- "I am besieged by a multitude of souls thirsting for Jesus," he commented to his companions. "They don't leave me one free moment." The gift of reading consciences and probing hearts made him famous: "I know them inside and out," he acknowledged. When approached by those who had not confessed for a long time, he reminded them of their forgotten sins.

Padre Pio spent a great part of his life in the confessional, listening to human miseries and sorrows with admirable patience. He can be considered a "martyr" of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "I feel fine, but I am overwhelmed with hundreds and thousands of Confessions that I hear day and night. I do not have an instant for myself," he once declared.

Vignette: – Jimmy Aiken- Catholic Answers “The Limits of Forgiveness”

“The prior two years witnessed particularly heinous crimes. The year 2001 saw the terrorist attacks, and 2002 saw the priestly sexual abuse scandal. In the wake of both of them, people were pondering the subject of forgiveness.

I remember, in the days immediately following 9/11, people calling *Catholic Answers Live* confused because their priests had told them that the U.S. must not strike back against the terrorists because of the Christian duty of forgiveness.

After the sex scandal broke, there were many—even those who had not themselves been abused—vociferously declaring that they “could never forgive” the priestly abusers for what they had done.

There’s something wrong with both of these views of forgiveness. The latter reflects the all-too-human tendency to not forgive no matter what the circumstances. It’s the attitude toward which Christ’s teachings regarding forgiveness are directed.

The former attitude reflects the opposite extreme, insisting on all forms of forgiveness regardless of the circumstances. Though this attitude of hyper-forgiveness seeks to cloak itself in the teachings of Christ, in reality it goes far beyond what Christ asks us to do and even what God himself does.”

Forgiveness thus does not mean treating someone as if they had never sinned. That would require us to let go of our reason as well as our anger.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. How should I deal with someone who won’t forgive me even though I have told them I am deeply sorry?
2. How has going to confession helped in your need to forgive someone who has said they were sorry?
3. When does holding on to anger and refusing to forgive become sinful?

Step it up!

What can you do over the next week/month to make a step change in (Forgiveness) Some examples:

1. Seek out someone who you may have offended and ask them for their forgiveness.
2. Pray about someone who has offended you but has not apologized or asked for forgiveness, and sincerely forgive them in your heart.
3. If you are holding on to something you have done, make time to go to Reconciliation and ask for God’s forgiveness. Then forgive yourself.

Author: Nick Carpinello with thanks to all those who have added to this topic over the years which were considered in this rendition.