

The Cross and Forgiveness part I | Splinters | March 29, 2020

The abundant life we all desire is found in doing what we were made for—and we were all made for forgiveness. Our forgiveness is defined by Jesus example on the cross. With the cross as our example we discover that forgiveness is not enabling and forgiveness isn't cheap.

WE WERE MADE FOR FORGIVENESS

- Jesus gave us special authority to forgive sins (see Matt. 18:18f and John 20:23)
- When we get rid of hate and embrace the forgiveness we were made to receive and give, we find our abundant life.
- We need concrete examples to define words like forgiveness. Paul points us towards the cross.

FORGIVENESS ISN'T ENABLING

- God has boundaries. Jesus didn't die on every hill. Forgiveness is not being walked all over or putting ourselves in harm's way.
- C.S. Lewis on Forgiveness in *Mere Christianity* reminds us that we can still punish people and hold them accountable while being forgiving if our intent is for their good.
- Forgiveness can look different in different situations—sometimes withholding accountability or punishment, sometimes giving it. The goal is the benefit of us from getting rid of hate and the other person by setting them free from our hate in some way.

FORGIVENESS ISN'T CHEAP

- The cross is offensive, it's saying someone else can pay the price for our hurt and shame.
- Forgiveness does not belittle injuries suffered. It's an admission that what was wrong is wrong. The fact it's not cheap, that it costs something, keeps it that way.
- Forgiveness is also generous. Jesus gave himself of his own free will for us.
- This all reminds us that we should not walk into forgiveness too lightly. It will cost us something, but the ultimate price has been paid.

CONCLUSION: NOT LETTING GO BUT HANDING OVER

- Forgiveness finds itself in the context of a life lived in Christian surrender.
- So forgiveness is not 'letting go' it is 'handing over'. It's entrusting our hurts and shames into the hands of Jesus over and over again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If the two poles on the spectrum of forgiveness are getting 'walked all over' (enabling) and withholding forgiveness (considering the cost too high). How has your upbringing led you to gravitate to one pole over the other?
2. How do you simultaneously forgive someone and put up a boundary?
3. What are some of the costs for us if we choose to walk the way of forgiveness? What are the benefits?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (if applicable)

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* esp. the chapter 'Forgiveness'

Julian of Norwich, *Showings*

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* esp. the latter part of Ch. 4

For a deeper theology of sin—its costs and forms and damages—and redemption, anything by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.