

Supporting Christian Unity in the Alfred Community



Forgive and Forget

Ever have somebody intentionally do you wrong? Probably. Remember how that felt? You bet. Have you resolved it? Hmmmm. How did you resolve it? Let us put aside our own thoughts ~ God is, after all, very clear on this subject. He doesn't ask us to forgive & forget... He commands us to do so.

In the Lord's Prayer:

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ~ Matthew 6:12 KJV

Further:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. ~ Matthew 6:14, 15 KJV

Did you hear that? Not only are we commanded to forgive others there is a clear and distinct warning of the outcome if we should choose not to be forgiving.

How are we supposed to do this? How are we to forgive?

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. ~ 2 Timothy 2:23-26 NIV

I don't know about you, but this has been a stumbling block for me. Time after time God has shown me that He is at work in all circumstances yet I feel compelled to see it through myself. "Closure" is the catch phrase of the day as if I alone have the skills necessary to gently show another the error of their ways and bring them to repentance. This is yet another area where I need to recall the serenity prayer and recognize my limitations and surrender control of the situation to God.

And finally...

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three

witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. ~ Matthew 18:15-17

These are step-by-step instructions are timeless and relevant even today. Does it work instantaneously? Not always. Is the outcome always positive for everyone involved? Not necessarily. But remember, God is in control and He will see His will through in His timing ~ not ours.

Let me share a personal experience. Over the course of the last year I have struggled to help and encourage a friend. Unfortunately some of the things I was doing at the beginning of the year were enabling those areas of opportunity rather than equipping this friend to break free. When I tried to approach the problem in a deeper manner and began to point out these areas of concern ~ literally, all hell broke loose and this friend became abusive and aloof. Even after following the steps illustrated above I had the displeasure of limiting contact with this friend after the hostility bled over into other arenas of our relationship including our personal lives.

I was deeply saddened that even after doing what I was told to do and seeking the counsel of other believers that the relationship became a mutual curse rather than a mutual blessing. Am I blameless in all this ~ I doubt it given my fleshly desires and recognizing some emotions I thought I had buried with my former self. And my point is not to reflect blame in this ugliness ~ my point is to illustrate that even after all of the headaches and heartaches ~ I love this friend and pray for him. And although I cannot find within me any desire to fellowship with this person ~ I forgive him his shortcomings just as I know my Father forgives me... even when my Father knows I will likely continue in my bad habits at least for a time.

Until we are all beyond our sins we need to be sure that we do not wait until we like our neighbors before we love them. And if we cannot bring ourselves to continue in a relationship with our neighbor we better be willing and able to forgive them.

Too much to get past right now? ~ Pray.

Too great a wrong done against you? ~ Pray.

Do the words, "I can forgive that person, but I can't forget what they've done." sound familiar? ~ Pray.

Can't forgive your own self for things you did in the past that God has already tossed away? ~ Pray.

As a matter of fact please allow me to join you right now because I am a long, long way from having this area of my life under control and I should be the first one on my knees.

Father in Heaven we cry out for mercy as we beg of you the courage, wisdom and grace to grant that same mercy to others that you have so willingly bestowed upon us. We struggle with our own understanding of these things and our flesh screams for justice as you remind us of our own shortcomings and the perpetual lovingkindness you give to us

freely as the only One who knows what justice is. Help us Lord to submit ourselves to you so that you may remove our selfish resentments and grudges. Help us Lord to love and to reconcile ourselves to others as you have reconciled yourself to your children through your Son Jesus Christ Our Lord and Savior so that we may be justified when we pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

May God continue to convict us of our areas of weakness so that we may learn and grow closer to Him!