

FORGIVENESS

If forgiving is so important, we really need to ask the question: what is forgiveness? There is great confusion on this matter today, and therefore we must first understand what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness does not mean that we will cease to hurt. The wounds are deep, and we may hurt for a very long time. Just because we continue to experience emotional pain does not mean that we have failed to forgive.

Forgiveness does not mean that we will forget. That would do violence to our rational faculties. Helmut Thielicke, a German pastor who endured the darkest days of the Nazi Third Reich, says, "One should never mention the words 'forgive' and 'forget' in the same breath." No, we remember, but in forgiving we no longer use the memory against others.

Forgiveness is not pretending that the offense did not really matter. It did matter, and it does matter, and there is no use pretending otherwise. The offense is real, but when we forgive, the offense no longer controls our behavior.

Forgiveness is not acting as if things are just the same as before the offense. We must face the fact that things will never be the same. By the grace of God they can be a thousand times better, but they will never again be the same.

from Prayer by Richard Foster

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Forgiveness is NOT:

1. A feeling;
2. Pretending you were not hurt;
3. Saying what the other person did was not wrong;
4. Meaning that you have to trust the other person;
5. Relieving the other person of responsibility.

Forgiveness IS:

1. A decision;
2. A decision I make;
3. Obeying God;
4. Living in a higher realm;
5. Responsibility for my actions and attitudes;
6. Not requiring the other person to answer to me;
7. Willingness to move in the opposite spirit.