

## FORGIVENESS & APOLOGIES

1. REASONS TO FORGIVE
  - a. God commands us to forgive (Matthew 18:21-35)
  - b. Forgiveness is a characteristic of the Christian life (Colossians 3:13)
  - c. Jesus is our role model and he forgave (Luke 23:34)
  - d. Forgiveness keeps Satan from gaining a foothold (2 Corinthians 2:10-11)
  - e. A local church cannot function without forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:10-11)
  - f. So that we can experience forgiveness (Matthew 6:14-15)
  - g. So that we can be set free of anger and bitterness (Ephesians 4:31-32; Hebrews 12:15)
  
2. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?
  - a. If our definition breaks down or makes it impossible, then it is faulty.
  - b. And God does not command the impossible.
  - c. Forgiveness is a continuing commitment not to retaliate
    - i. Bring up the past
    - ii. Harbor bitter or resentful thoughts
    - iii. View another with contempt
    - iv. Passive-aggressive behavior
  - d. Forgiveness is a replacement of retribution with unconditional love
  - e. Forgiveness is not hating and feeding our anger
  - f. Forgiveness is a process
  - g. Forgiveness is supernatural
  
3. WHAT IS **NOT** FORGIVENESS?
  - a. Forgetting (e.g., Isaiah 43:25, Psalm 103:12)
  - b. Absence of pain or anger (e.g., Ephesians 4:26)
  - c. Trust or renewed fellowship (i.e., reconciliation)
  - d. Mercy
  - e. Saying it's ok ("just letting go!")
  - f. Minimizing or excusing
  
4. HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE FORGIVE?
  - a. Every time (Matthew 18:21-22)
  - b. But trust has to be rebuilt (criteria setting!)
  
5. WHAT IF THEY DON'T ASK FOR FORGIVENESS?
  - a. Just do it!
  - b. If you wait they may never ask and you may become increasingly bitter
  - c. Many people live their whole lives without asking forgiveness or apologizing
  - d. But do we tell them? ... it depends

6. MUST I FORGIVE MYSELF?
  - a. No Bible verse says this
  - b. You have a PhD in loving you
  - c. Only the offended person can forgive you
  
7. EFFECTIVE APOLOGIES
  - a. To the extent possible reach agreement about your actions and the gravity of what has occurred (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; 1 John 1:9; James 5:16)
    - i. Identify the offense (own it)
    - ii. Confess the offense (words matter)
    - iii. Acknowledge the harm caused
    - iv. Express regret for what you did (Psalm 51:16-17)
  - b. Explicitly ask for forgiveness – “Will you forgive me?”
  - c. Repent / express a desire to change and willingness to be confronted if you repeat the offense
  - d. Recognize the need to rebuild trust
  
8. INEFFECTIVE APOLOGIES aka THE ART OF THE NON-APOLOGY
  - a. Non-apologies are designed to avoid accountability
  - b. Non-apologies are given as a perceived necessary step to repair the damage done to one’s personal agenda
  - c. Non-apologies are couched in terms of “if”, “but”, hedges, deflections, qualifications, obfuscations or the passive (‘mistakes were made’)
  - d. Non-apologies compound the offense
  
9. REPAIR ATTEMPTS
  - a. Show a willingness to accept responsibility
  - b. Open a door for conflict resolution
  
10. HAVE I TRULY FORGIVEN?
  - a. What do you do when the memory comes up?
  - b. You can always know in the moment whether you are forgiving the person or not
  - c. Remember forgiving is a continuous commitment / action of forgiveness
  - d. With serious offenses we will have times of need to recommit to non-retaliation and giving it over to God
  
11. TAKE AWAY
  - a. We must understand forgiveness and apologies because you cannot do what you do not know
  - b. We need to be peacemakers
  - c. We must have the humility and peace with God that enables us to forgive (even if they did not ask) and apologize (even if we think they “made a mountain out of a mole hill”)