

RESOURCE:

FORGIVENESS PRINCIPLES

1. The difficulty of forgiveness lies in that it is unnatural—it is not the nature of things.

It is counterintuitive to our basic human instincts and nature. A holy God's forgiveness was a mystery (before the coming of Christ), as God Himself proclaimed in Exodus 34:7. Forgiveness is therefore always a wonder and surprise, and it needs to be accounted for rather than ever taken for granted.

2. The dynamic of forgiveness is the atoning death of Christ.

The work of Christ provides satisfaction for sin through the self-substitution of God. This is what makes forgiveness possible (from both God and humans) despite its difficulty and unnaturalness. Our forgiveness of others is based on and empowered by (theologically, motivationally, and practically) God's forgiveness of us through the cross.

3. The fading of forgiveness comes because of the inadequacy of contemporary forgiveness models, which lack the vertical dimension. Christian forgiveness

- (a) differs from the therapeutic model because it seeks justice and reconciliation;
- (b) differs from the merited or transactional forgiveness model because it offers internal forgiveness;
- (c) differs from the modern antipathy toward any forgiveness because it shows us the need for it, the costliness of it, and the power of it.

4. The history of forgiveness is rooted in the Bible.

While all cultures have some idea of forgiveness, the dominant ideas about it in the world today derive from the Old and New Testaments. The loss of orientation to forgiveness today has to do with both the decline of Christian faith and the distortion of the concept within the churches.

5. The definition of forgiveness is to renounce revenge and be open to reconciliation.

Revenge is being satisfied by another person's unhappiness, especially that was inflicted by you. To forgive is to

- (a) name the wrong truthfully as indeed wrong and punishable (rather than merely excusing it) but also to
- (b) identify with the perpetrator as a fellow sinner, to
- (c) release the wrongdoer from liability from personal payback by absorbing the debt oneself (rather than merely pardoning), and finally to
- (d) aim for reconciliation and the restoration of the relationship that was broken by the wrong.

6. The dependencies of forgiveness.

- (a) Internal or attitudinal forgiveness is not dependent on the response of the perpetrator. It can be done in any circumstances.
- (b) The work of actual reconciliation is dependent on the wronged person doing internal forgiveness and the repentance of the perpetrator.

7. The resources for forgiveness are twofold:

- (a) poverty of spirit—and the humility that comes from knowing our salvation is by sheer grace, not merit, and
- (b) wealth of spirit—and the assurance of love that comes from knowing our salvation is by sheer grace, not merit.

From *FORGIVE*, by Timothy Keller

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