



Forgiveness and Restoration ~ February 24, 2019

OPEN

Don Cherry provides colorful hockey commentary! Analyzing a scoring play he often says, “it all started back here”. And when it comes to the spiritual disciplines of forgiveness and restoration, we must look back to the foundation, namely, the way in which God has forgiven and restored the believer.

Take some time to prayerfully read Ephesians 4:29 to 5:2. Especially note the way that followers of Jesus are invited to emulate the way God has forgiven.

Richard Fosters writes, “The classical disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm....God has ordained the disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us.”

At communion we place ourselves in a place where God can bless us. How? We have the opportunity to gain a fuller grasp of His grace, expressed in Jesus Christ. Think of it...the price of our forgiveness was the very body and blood of Jesus Christ - a sweet smelling offering and sacrifice unto God.

DIG

Our forgiveness and restoration of one another must be patterned after, and empowered by the sacrifice of Jesus. However, it is tempting to see these disciplines as what we do to let someone who has hurt us “off the hook”.

Can you think of a time when you struggled to forgive another because it felt like you would be not holding them responsible for their actions?

Consider the context for our passage. The preceding section of Ephesians 4 reveals a very important perspective on how God has linked us in Christ...

- vv. 1-10 Followers of Jesus are one Body in Him...
- vv. 11-16 ...functioning effectively to cause mature growth...
- vv. 17-21 ...in contrast to the futile, ungodly lifestyle...
- vv. 22-28 ...which Christians lay aside to put on Christ’s new life!

So, the practice of forgiveness and restoration is an essential component of our shared life in Christ. Consider two more specific grounding truths:

[a] verse 23 - followers of Jesus have been **renewed**

[b] verse 25 - followers of Jesus are now **related**

If we are going to relate as members of Christ’s family, there will be offences and opportunities for forgiveness. But as we address offences, we must remain rooted in the fact that we have been forgiven by God.

1. *Forgetting* - Colossians 1:13-14 - This term conveys the idea “to cancel a debt” meaning releasing the offender from a debt or a loan which extends to releasing our inner hostility against the person.
2. *Favoring* - Ephesians 4:32 - The term used here has the term “grace” in it. It means “to bestow favor unconditionally” thus giving grace to the offender, though it is undeserved.
3. *Freely* - Romans 12:18 - Forgiveness is something we can do without the offender having a change of heart. We are to relate in peaceful ways “as far as it depends on you”.
4. *Frequently* - Matthew 18:21-22 - We must be prepared to forgive far more than some arbitrary number of times. True forgiveness is an ongoing commitment.

Just as it is foundational to the practice of forgiveness, the sacrifice of Jesus is also the key to restoration. We are commanded in Galatians 5:1-2 to fulfill the law of Christ. How? We do so by helping to nurture the brother or sister who needs restoration. This term means to correct and was commonly used as a surgical term, or for the setting of a bone.

How often do we condemn another who has stumbled? How do we help them “set the broken bone” and return to spiritual strength and vitality?

REFLECT

The spiritual practices of forgiveness and restoration are hard. Yet the warning of Hebrews 12:14-15 is serious. Read this passage and consider what can develop in our hearts if we fail to forgive.

Read the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35. What will be the effects in our lives if we lose sight of how much God has forgiven us?

In their early development sunflowers move to track the sun from east to west. At night they return to face the east. The, towards the end of their life-cycle this pattern changes and the sunflowers are no longer **heliotropic**. We need to be **Jesus-tropic** if we are going to live lives of forgiveness and restoration!



Let’s allow God to speak to us today about the place forgiveness and restoration has in our lifestyle. Have you been rescued by His grace?

For further reflection, read [Why Do We Find It Hard To Forgive?](#) or listen to the inspiration video [Forgive Like Jesus](#).