

Forgiveness

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Introduction.

Having put my “Hope – Life to the full” to one side to let it rest and mature, I asked Yesh, "please let me know on what Abba(*) would now like me to concentrate ."

Later that day, the day after the Feast of the Assumption, the word ‘forgiveness’ dawned in my mind. So here we are.

As an introduction to the introduction:

Green is the colour of forgiveness

A symbol of forgiveness is a white dove - or white pigeon carrying olive leaf branch.

Forgiveness flowers are yellow roses and daffodils (Narcissus); in Buddhism, the lotus flower .

As a spirit animal, the octopus represents forgiveness.

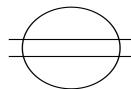
Throughout history, the act of extending an olive branch has been a symbol of extending an offer of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Offering an olive branch to someone indicates a willingness to mend relationships and move forward, even after disagreements or conflicts.



The “Mpatapo”, from Ghana, “knot of reconciliation” in English, expresses the idea that conflicts and disagreements can be resolved through peaceful dialogue and understanding, leading to the re-establishment of harmony and unity.

The heart’s association with emotions makes it a natural symbol for forgiveness.

Handshakes and hugs declare forgiveness.



This symbol, dating back to 3000bce, is found, in various forms, across the Southwest regions of the United States, particularly in states like New Mexico, Tesco, and Utah.

The circle symbolizes unity, harmony, and the cyclical nature of life, while the two intersecting lines represent the act of letting go, the embodiment of forgiveness, and the promise of new beginnings.

(*) For me, The Trinitarian Divinity is Abba, Yeshua and Ruah (Fem).

Jesus, The Christ, as a young man would have been known as Yeshua ben Yosef - Jesus son of Joseph.

And probably, was to his friends ,'Yesh'.

As he is my best friend - *anam cara* - Soul Friend or Soul Mate – for me he is Yesh.

That I how I address him in my prayer.

In my liturgy, I refer to him as Jesus – Christ: Jesus the Anointed. During my many years of teaching,

I discovered that all too many young people thought the Holy Family were

Joseph Christ, Mary Christ and Jesus Christ. Christ, a surname.

In 1 John 4,7 we read, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." Love makes us 'God-like.' We enter into the heart – stand in, 'under-stand' - the one we love.

If we realise that God loves us, (as, aged 15, I did on Eriskay, ref AJTE Vol 1) and respond to that love by loving God, we can then love ourselves and others. After all, Jesus said, "Whatever you do to the least of mine, you do unto me."(Mt 25.40)

Thus, underpinning my take on forgiveness are two statements:

1. To love is to understand and 2. To understand is to forgive.

These apply to myself as well as to others. However, as The State cannot love, it cannot understand and thus cannot forgive. Its language is justice.

1. Its identity

Forgive, or pardon, from Latin, *per* "thoroughly" + *donare* "give as a gift," encapsulates the notion of 'thorough giving'. Forgiveness is a wholehearted gift.

Forgiveness means different things to different people. But in general, it involves an intentional decision to let go of resentment and anger. The act that hurt or offended you might always be with you.

"Love the sinners. Hate – yet forgive – their sins," is ingrained into my philosophy (or is it theology?) on my relationships.

Admitting – confessing and apologising(*) for – my own weaknesses and mistakes, has helped me understand and forgive the failings of others. In the pigeonhole of 'our weaknesses' we all have - though often different – many things.

Psychologists generally define forgiveness as 'a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.'

Generally, it is inevitable not to hurt each other in life and relationships, but learning the types of forgiveness and when to forgive can help us move on along our Journey to Eternity (the title of my autobiography).

When you are hurt, your first instinct may be to react by reciprocating the hurt with resentment, hatred, or anger. This is only normal. However, forgiveness can help you see through - and beyond - the dark moments.

(*)Research carried out in 2024 by mobile phone maker HONOR, discovered that 25% of people surveyed feel embarrassed about apologising. Some fear regret would reignite an argument while one in seven simply hate to admit they were wrong.

Some of us, especially the spiritually conscious, were taught about the power of forgiveness and how it can help us manage our anger towards our offenders and create peace of mind for ourselves.

It is wise to understand that we all handle emotional pain differently. Whether you forgive your offenders or hurt them back, sever the relationship totally or rebuild the relationship, hold a grudge for years depending on your age, experience, and background.

To help you understand the power and importance of forgiveness in a relationship, this article will delve into the types of forgiveness, the or levels of forgiveness, the importance of forgiveness, and the ways of forgiveness.

What is forgiveness in a relationship?

Forgiveness means removing all the pent-up anger you have towards someone and a situation. To an extent, forgiveness means letting go, but letting go of what? What are you releasing?

In a typical relationship, forgiveness means vulnerability. Despite being hurt, rather than responding with resentment, withdrawal, or anger, you become a bigger – and better - person if you change your feelings, thoughts, and actions toward whoever offended you.

Forgiveness, when executed well, makes you feel less pessimistic about the person and situation. Instead of seeing your offender as that unpleasant human – or humans - you accept they are – as you - prone to making mistakes - and start thinking more positively about them.

Meanwhile, forgiveness doesn't erupt suddenly after an argument, a fight, or a crushing discovery. It takes careful consideration and thought. That includes analysing the whole event and having a one-to-one conversation with your partner to understand their reasons.

Forgiveness in a relationship is a healthy way of reducing the emotional damage in you and helping your partner. Holding grudges will only cause us more pain as we think about the incident often.

Also, it may sabotage you in carrying out your everyday activities effectively. That's double pain as you are hurt and letting it affect your affairs. No one should ever go through that.

Meanwhile, forgiveness doesn't mean you forget what your partner or another offender does, which is why we have different types of forgiveness. That leads us to our next point:

Are forgiveness and forgetfulness the same?

The simple answer is No! Forgiveness isn't the same as forgetfulness.

Forgiveness may mean letting go of your anger, resentment, and grudges towards a person, but it doesn't mean your offender's action will suddenly disappear from your memory. Except, of course, there is a neurological problem as you can hardly forget when anyone hurts you.

Pain comes with emotional injury and betrayal of trust. It involves the sudden transformation of someone you used to know. It is not easy to forget the hurt someone, especially your partner, causes you. How then can you forget what they do to you?

Forgiving your partner does not mean you forget the pain, disappointment, and embarrassment they cause you. It only means you are emotionally mature enough to make room for repair and understand yourself and your partner more.

6 stages of forgiveness in a relationship

It isn't enough to say, "I forgive you." Of course, anyone can say that, but the true power of forgiveness can only be harnessed when you go through all the stages of forgiveness. Learn about the stages of forgiveness in the following paragraphs:

1. Acknowledge

This means recognizing the hurt and pain as they are. Who hurt you, why, and how long? Only once you know the details of what requires forgiveness can you consider moving into the next steps.

Educational Psychologist Dr. Robert D. Enright, in his book 'Forgiveness is a Choice,' talks about the need to confront the depths of one's anger to forgive some completely. Without this, you will not be able to move on successfully.

2. Consider

Now assess the hurt or pain. How do you feel? Think about this person, your relationship with them, and their actions. This stage is essential before you forgive and move on in a relationship.

3. Accept

Understand that you change the past. Your anger or resentment will only cause you more pain than the other person. This is also where you decide if you want to forgive and move on in a relationship or not.

4. Decide

At this stage, you determine whether to forgive or not. It is only after this that you can understand the types of forgiveness.

5. Repair

At this stage, you need to rebuild the relationship with your partner. Out of all the states of forgiveness, this is the most tasking. It is the beginning of forgiveness in a relationship. It means relearning and unlearning everything you know about the person.

Rebuilding the relationship may include communication or the exchange of gifts.

6. Forgive

Now you need to let go of the anger, resentment, and hatred. While you don't forget your partner's actions, you no longer see them as the enemy but as a person who makes mistakes. Forgiveness in a relationship is accessible only after ticking all the other stages.

4 types of forgiveness in a relationship

Forgiveness means letting go, but there are different types. The forgiveness you choose depends on your relationship with the person, the extent of the hurt they cause you, and your emotional maturity. These different types of forgiveness are in four levels. Learn more in the following:

1. Unconditional forgiveness

When you give unconditional forgiveness, you stop acting and thinking negatively. While you can't – and should not - forget what they did, your subsequent actions will be positive and creative, rather than destructive. Your forgiveness will not be conditional on an apology.

In unreserved forgiveness, you give the person a second chance to prove themselves as the loyal or better person you used to know. It is now up to the person to prove you wrong or right.

Unconditional forgiveness is a means to mend a broken relationship and rebuild it. Although forgiveness without any conditions can be difficult, it is the best relief for the individuals concerned. Bear in mind – and I will repeat the mantra – 'forgiveness sets the forgiver free.'

2. Conditional forgiveness

Conditional forgiveness forgives the person, but the forgiver is constantly looking out for themselves.

Conditional forgiveness practices the saying, "Once bitten, twice shy." While you see them as a person worthy of change and a second chance, you watch their actions towards you in the future. It is a way of protecting yourself in the future.

Conditional forgiveness tends to raise its head after a betrayal in a business deal or personal infidelity. The offender is placed on probation. Re-offend and the culprit gets the red card – and is sent off the field of your friends.

3. Dismissive forgiveness

Out of all the types of forgiveness, dismissive forgiveness is the lowest form. You hold no grudges or resentment against the person, but you have no desire to rebuild the relationship. You ignore and move on with your life positively, but not move on in the relationship.

Dismissive forgiveness allows you to reduce the closeness you used to have with the other person. It may mean breaking up with your partner or quitting a job involving a problematic boss. In forgiveness that is dismissive, you have no hate towards the person and no desire to rebuild the relationship.

Furthermore, in dismissive forgiveness, you have no strength to get revenge or rebuild the relationship, and you no longer want to waste time and effort. All you want is to put boundaries in place so the person doesn't have the chance to hurt you again.

4. Grace forgiveness

In grace forgiveness, you don't believe you have the power to forgive and move on in the relationship. This type of forgiveness is common with spiritually inclined people. They believe forgiveness is for God alone to grant.

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As in grief, so in forgiveness there are – typically - five stages to full and final forgiveness.

The first stage of forgiveness is Denial. I can only forgive that which I am able to acknowledge. ...

The second stage of forgiveness is Anger. ...

The third stage of forgiveness is Bargaining. ...

The next stage of forgiveness is Depression. ...

The final stage of forgiveness is Acceptance.

Forgiveness can be both active and receptive: to forgive and be forgiven. We need to learn how to forgive others – and ourselves. We need to acquire the ability of asking for and embracing the forgiveness of others – including God. Confession, leading to reconciliation, is a happy sacrament.

Mark Twain(1835-1919) said that, “forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) taught us that, “forgiveness is the final form of love”.

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong” wrote Mahatma Gandhi(1869-1948) in his “All Men are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections”

“Forgiveness has nothing to do with absolving a criminal of his crime. It has everything to do with relieving oneself of the burden of being a victim—letting go of the pain and transforming oneself from victim to survivor” stated C.R. Strahan(born 1971), “The Roan Maverick”

“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude” taught Martin Luther King Jr.(1929-68).

“Never forget the three powerful resources you always have available to you are love, prayer, and forgiveness.” Reminded us H. Jackson Brown, Jr.((1940-2021)

The Bible teaches that **unselfish love** is the basis for true forgiveness, since “it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Forgiving others means letting go of resentment and giving up any claim to be compensated for the hurt or loss we have suffered.

“Forgiveness will not be possible until compassion is born in your heart,” stated Thich Nhat Hanh (1926 – 2022) a Vietnamese Thiền Buddhist monk, peace activist, prolific author, poet and teacher, who founded the Plum Village Tradition.

“Forgiveness is the sweetest revenge” joked, seriously, Isaac Friedmann(1805–1875)

“Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much,” added Oscar Wilde(1854-1900)

And, from Josh Billings(1818-1885), “There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness.”

“Forgive all who have offended you, not for them, but for yourself,” encouraged Harriet Nelson(1909-1994).

“Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting,” said William Arthur Ward(1921-1994).

Paul Boese(1923-1976) reminded us that “forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.”

John F. Kennedy(1917-63) encouraged us to “ forgive your enemies, but never forget their names.”

“To err is human; to forgive, divine,” a famous statement of Alexander Pope(1688-1744).

And then from Franklin P. Adams(1881-1960), “to err is human; to forgive, infrequent.”

Confucius(551-479BCE) made it clear that he thought that, “the more you know yourself, the more you forgive yourself.”

Jessamyn West (1902-1984) stated that, “it is very easy to forgive others their mistakes; it takes more grit and gumption to forgive them for having witnessed your own.”

“Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil; with them forgive yourself.” William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale* Act 5, Scene 1.

And in *King Lear*, Act 4 scene 7, “Pray you now, forget and forgive.”

Forgive many things in others; nothing in yourself. declared Decimus Magnus Ausonius (born c. 310, Burdigala, Gaul [now Bordeaux, France]—died c. 395, Burdigala) a Latin poet and rhetorician.

“ 'Tis the most tender part of love, each other to forgive.” Wrote John Sheffield(1931-2010)

“If you haven't forgiven yourself something, how can you forgive others?” asked Dolores Huerta(born 1930)

“Forgiveness is almost a selfish act because of its immense benefits to the one who forgives. The hatred you're carrying is a live coal in your heart - far more damaging to yourself than to them.” Declared Lawana Blackwell(born 1952) in her, “The Dowry of Miss Lydia Clark”

Norman Cousins(1915-1990) taught that “life is an adventure in forgiveness.” Was he right, dear reader?

“The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget,” wrote Thomas Szasz(1920-2012), *The Second Sin*(1973) .

“A woman can forgive a man for the harm he does her...but she can never forgive him for the sacrifices he makes on her account,” wrote W. Somerset Maugham(1874-1965) in his ‘*The Moon and Sixpence*’.

And finally, from William Blake (1757-1827), “It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend. “

2. Its importance

Forgiveness is vitally important for the mental health of those who have been victimized. It propels people forward rather than keeping them emotionally engaged in an injustice or trauma. Research shows that forgiveness leads to healthier relationships, improved mental health, less anxiety, stress and hostility, fewer symptoms of depression, lower blood pressure, a stronger immune system, improved heart health and improved self-esteem.

If you decide to forgive the person, you are relieved and free. As Brené Brown (born 1965, an American professor, social worker, author, and podcast host) put it, “anger is a powerful catalyst but a life-sucking companion.”

Roberto Assagioli(1888-19174), and Italian psychiatrist and pioneer of transpersonal psychology, founder of the Psychosynthesis movement), reminded us that, “without forgiveness life is governed by... an endless cycle of resentment and retaliation.”

Catherine Ponder(1874-1903) believed that, 'The forgiving state of mind is a magnetic power for attracting good.'

“When a deep injury is done to us, we never heal until we forgive,” Nelson Mandela(1918-2013) warned us.

“The forgiving state of mind is a magnetic power for attracting good “ encouraged Catherine Ponder(born 1927)

“Just as white light consists of coloured rays, so reverence for life contains all the components of ethics: love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, peacefulness, and power to forgive,” wrote Albert Schweitzer(1875-1965) in his, “*The Teaching of Reverence for Life*”

“Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.” Wrote Cherie Carter-Scott (born 1949) in her, “*If Life Is a Game, These Are the Rules*”.

We were warned by Paul Lewis Boese(1923-76) that, “forgiveness does not change the past but it does change the future”.

The Bible makes the importance of forgiveness clear.

In the New Testament:

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Mark 11:25 - And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Matthew 18:21-22 - Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Matthew 6:14-15 - For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Luke 6:37 - “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

Luke 15:11-32 - usually referred to as “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” is, for me, “The Parable of The Prodigal Father” – who poured the whole of his heart into his Foolish Son- and was mega prodigal with his forgiveness.

Luke 22, 60-62 “But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

It was that look – I am convinced of love, not accusation - that moved Peter to tears and eventually in John 21,17 to blurt out “ you know everything. You know that I love you.” And, consequently he was still in charge of looking after Yesh’s flock: “Feed MY sheep.”

Colossians 3:13 - Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Matthew 6:12 - And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Acts 2:38 - And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:7 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

To better understand why God commands us to forgive and why it's so critical to be able to forgive, we have written a detailed article on [What Does the Bible Say About Forgiveness?](#)

A Prayer for Forgiveness: "Father, please forgive me when I allow anger and bitterness to fill my heart because I refuse to forgive someone who has hurt me. Teach me how to lay down my rights and choose to forgive in the same way You have forgiven me." (Mary Southerland)

The Bible says that forgiveness is a responsibility of humans, and that God will forgive us if we forgive others:

In the Original Testament

Joseph- his story is told in Genesis (37–50) - was one of Jacob's 12 sons.

His father- who had wrestled with a mysterious stranger, a divine being, who changed his name to Israel - meaning 'let God prevail.' His father loved him more than any of the others and gave him a resplendent "coat of many colours," the brothers seized him and sold him to a party of Ishmaelites, or Midianites, who carry him to Egypt where, eventually, he became steward to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials.

When his brothers came to Egypt in search of food - as back home there had been poor harvests - Joseph could have chosen to punish or ignore his brothers. He could have decided not to give them any grain and let them starve. But instead, he forgave them and they became a family again.

In a pivotal moment, in Genesis 50:20, he utters, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." Joseph's forgiveness produced a great harvest across the PIES: the Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual dimensions of his family's lives.

Some fourteen centuries later, St Paul would write that 'all things work together for good to [those] who loved God.' (Rom. 8:28.)

In 1 Samuel 24, we read how David chose to forgive rather than to kill Saul.

The Lord gave Saul to David and David had a chance to kill Saul but didn't. He forgave Saul and pleaded with Saul to stop listening to the lies.

David has three opportunities to take revenge on his enemies through stealth or force, but in each case he doesn't. At first, it's out of guilt, then because of Abigail's wise intervention, and finally in confidence that God will fight his battles - so David forgave Saul.

Numbers 14:19–21 - 'Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.' Then the LORD said, 'I have pardoned, according to your word. But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD,'

2 Chronicles 7:14 - If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 30:9b - For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.

Nehemiah 9:31 - Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Psalm 32:1- Blessed is the one
whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Psalm 32:5 - I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,'
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Psalm 86:5 - For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

Psalm 103:12 - as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Proverbs 17:9 - Whoever covers an offense seeks love,
but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.

Proverbs 28:13 - Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Isaiah 1:18 - Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

Isaiah 43:25–26 - I, I am he
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.
Put me in remembrance; let us argue together;
set forth your case, that you may be proved right.

Isaiah 55:7 - Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Jeremiah 3:12b - Return, faithless Israel,
declares the Lord.
I will not look on you in anger,
for I am merciful,
declares the Lord;
I will not be angry forever.

Jeremiah 31:34 - And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying,
'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Daniel 9:9 - To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him.

Joel 2:13 - And rend your hearts and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love;
and he relents over disaster.

Micah 7:18 - Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.
He will again have compassion on us;
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.

Judaism – which sees the Christian Original Testament as its Tanakh (an acronym derived from the names of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah (Instruction, or Law, also called the Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings))- teaches that because humans have been given free will, they are responsible for their own actions. The belief is that if they commit an action which is wrong, then they must seek forgiveness. Forgiveness can only be accepted from the victim.

Judaism places great emphasis on *teshuva*, or repentance. This is when Jews may actively try to make amends for the wrongs they have committed. They do this by: reflecting on their wrongs, seeking forgiveness for their wrongs, praying and turning to the Torah for guidance

In Hinduism, not only should one forgive others, but one must also seek forgiveness if one has wronged someone else. Forgiveness is to be sought from the individual wronged, as well as society at large, by acts of charity, purification, fasting, rituals and meditative introspection.

In Hinduism, forgiveness is an important part of the religious worldview. It is believed that one should forgive others and seek forgiveness if they have wronged someone else. Forgiveness is related to qualities like compassion and forbearance, and is expressed through the Sanskrit word *kshama*.

Hindus can seek forgiveness from the person they wronged, as well as society, through acts of charity, fasting, purification, rituals, and meditation. Some believe that forgiveness is important for divine love, and that it can liberate the heart. Others believe that forgiveness can benefit people because God will respond in kind.

Hindus also worship Ganga, the goddess of purification and forgiveness, who personifies the Ganges river. Ganga is often depicted as a beautiful woman riding a makara, a divine crocodile-like creature.

However, in Hinduism there are ‘sins’ that cannot be forgiven.:

1. Engaging in violence. Hinsa, or violence, is considered to be one of the greatest sins in Hinduism and for this there is no forgiving. Hinsa in any form, be it physical harm to any living being, or mental and emotional harm to anyone, human or animal, is considered sinful. The principle of ahimsa, or non-violence, is deeply ingrained in Hindu traditions and teaching and all Hindu gurus and intellectuals have preached the policy of ahimsa. Acts such as killing, injuring, or even speaking harshly to others are considered grave sins that can have bad effects on someone’s karma.

2. Walking on the path of Adharma. Adharma or going against righteousness, moral order, or natural law is another grave sin according to Hindu philosophers. Adharma equates to acts of dishonesty, betraying someone, exploiting the poor, needy, or any living being, and injustice against others. In Hinduism, dharma, or righteousness, is one of the most important things to uphold and it guides people to lead a virtuous life. Any deviation from dharma is considered to be a serious sin that is capable of ruining the peace of the person affected. Adharma not just harms people but also disturbs the balance of the universe. The sin of Adharma is unforgivable and leads to accumulation of bad karma.

3. According to Hindu intellectuals, steeya, or theft, is another grave sin. Steeya includes, but is not limited to, taking away what rightfully belongs to another person without their consent. This could be in the form of stealing material possessions, someone’s intellectual property, or even someone's time or dignity. Hindu scriptures, from different time frames, emphasise the importance of being honest and living with integrity. And so, stealing is seen as a direct violation of these values and becomes an unforgivable sin.

4. Being envious of others. Pishuna, which refers to being wicked and envious towards others, is another significant sin in Hinduism. When a Hindu feels discontent or resentment towards someone who is more successful, has more possessions, or qualities as compared to others, he or she commits a sin. It is always said that envy and wicked nature stems from a lack of happiness in our own life and this is an indication that the person lacks gratitude for their own blessings. And so, any envy that stems from unhealthy comparison and jealousy leads to negative thoughts and actions which make for grave sins.

In Hinduism, it is very important for people to develop and encourage good qualities. Being content, generous and compassionate towards other beings is of utmost importance and envy does not develop any such qualities in people. And so, it is considered a grave, unforgivable sin.

5. Being obsessed with illusion. The idea of ‘Maaya’, or illusion, is one that has always been shunned in Hindu philosophy. Popularly used by saying ‘Moh Maaya’, that is, ‘love and attachment for illusion’, Hindus are strictly taught to never fall in the trap of ‘Maaya’ for it is a sinking ship. It is believed that falling prey to maaya leads to ignorance, attachment to the worldly, and a distorted perception of reality. ‘Maaya’ makes people believe that all is going to go good for them if they satisfy and please their indulgence and extravagance. But, Hinduism teaches the importance of rising above maaya through self-realisation and spiritual practice.

6. In Hinduism, a guru (teacher) is placed on the same level as God himself. Such is the importance of a Guru in Hindu philosophy. And so, Guru droh, or betrayal of the teacher, is

considered one of the gravest sins in Hinduism. The guru, be it an academic teacher or a spiritual teacher, plays the most important role in a person's life. Be it teaching them the art of living or securing marks in exams, it is only a Guru who does it all.

Betraying the trust and teachings of one's guru is seen as a grave sin that not only dishonours the relationship but also gives rise to negative energies between the two. In Hindu tradition, the bond between a guru and disciple is sacred, and thus going against this bond by betraying the teacher is believed to bring the wrath of the Gods in this life and the afterlife.

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Though, given the lives of so many in the Middle East, it is hard to believe that forgiveness is a core belief in Islam, and is discussed in both the Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam emphasizes the idea that Allah is forgiving and merciful, and that he will forgive his servants' sins if they repent and try to improve themselves. In many places - including 2:175, 4:106, 4:110, 39:5, and 39:53 - The Qur'an describes Allah as forgiving or the great forgiver,

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Mahavira (born in the early 6th century BCE to a royal Jain family of ancient India) stated that "Anger begets more anger, and forgiveness and love lead to more forgiveness and love."

Jonathan Lockwood Huie(born June 1945) encouraged us to "forgive others, not because they deserve forgiveness, but because you deserve peace." "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." "Forgiveness is the final form of love." "I forgive myself and set myself free."

"The stupid neither forgive nor forget; the naive forgive and forget; the wise forgive but do not forget," is a statement by Thomas Szasz(1820-2012, a Hungarian-American academic and psychiatrist. What do you think dear reader? Is he right?

Forgive many things in others; nothing in yourself.

Anger makes you smaller, while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.

In psychology, forgiveness is a conscious decision to let go of feelings of resentment, anger, and bitterness towards someone who has wronged you. It's more than just accepting what happened or stopping being angry, but rather a voluntary change in your feelings, attitudes, and behaviour. Forgiveness can allow you to express compassion and generosity towards the person who wronged you, rather than being dominated by resentment.

Repentance is the act of expressing regret or remorse for one's actions and turning away from them. Forgiveness is the act of pardoning or letting go of an offense or debt. Both concepts are important for personal growth and spiritual development.

Repentance is more than just recognizing wrongdoings or saying sorry. It's a change of heart and mind that involves turning away from sin and turning to God for forgiveness and help. Repentance is a chance to become better, and God will be patient as people work to overcome bad habits and addictions.

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Analysing Repentance – which can open the door to forgiveness.

Here are eight signs I've gleaned, from life and God's Word.

1. A Repentant Person is appalled by sin

Horrified by what they've done, they'll humble themselves, grieve the pain they've caused, and be cut to the heart in their conviction. As the prophet mourned in Isaiah 6:5, "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."

2. They make amends

In Luke 19:1–10, we read the story of Zacchaeus and the generosity he demonstrated as part of his repentance. A tax collector, thief, and oppressor of God's people, Zacchaeus made amends: "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (v. 8). And Jesus confirmed the authenticity of Zacchaeus's repentance: "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9).

3. They accept consequences

A genuinely repentant person will accept consequences. These may include losing the trust of others, relinquishing a position of authority, or submitting to worldly authorities such as law enforcement. When the thief on the cross repented, he said to his companion, "Do you not fear God? . . . We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve" (Luke 23:40–41). And Jesus commended his repentance by assuring him of his salvation: "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

4. They don't expect or demand forgiveness

When Jacob approached Esau and repented, he didn't expect mercy, let alone compassion. In Genesis 32, we read he felt "great fear" and "distress" (v. 7). He anticipated an attack (v. 11) and considered himself unworthy of kindness (v. 10). In fact, so certain was Jacob of retribution that he separated his wives, children, and servants from him, lest Esau's anger fall on them too.

5. They feel the depth of the pain they've caused

A repentant person won't try to minimize, downplay, or excuse what they've done. They won't point to all their good works as if those actions somehow outweigh or cancel out the bad. They'll view even their "righteous acts" as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). They won't shame the offended party for being hurt or angry. They won't blame their victims or other people for making them sin. Rather, they'll take responsibility, acknowledge the damage they've done, and express remorse.

6. They change their behaviour

A truly repentant person will realize they need God to sanctify their heart. They'll proactively work to change their behaviour and take steps to avoid sin and temptation. Consider the stark contrast between the church persecutor Saul before salvation and after. Acts 9 tells us that even though some Christians were understandably hesitant to trust him, his character had already altered dramatically.

7. They grant space to heal

The fruit of the Spirit includes patience, kindness, grace, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). A truly repentant person will demonstrate these consistently. They won't feel entitled to trust or acceptance; rather, they'll be humble, unassuming, and willing to sacrifice their own wants and needs for the benefit of the injured party.

8. They're awestruck by forgiveness

When Jacob received Esau's forgiveness, he was so astounded he wept: "To see your face is like seeing the face of God, for you have received me favourably" (Gen. 30:10). Jacob realized that forgiveness is divine miracle, a picture of the Messiah, and a sign of the Lord's mercy. Though Jacob and Esau hadn't spoken for 40 years, Jacob knew God had enabled Esau, by grace, to forgive him.

You cannot travel back in time to fix your mistakes, but you can learn from them and forgive yourself for not knowing better. Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil; with them forgive yourself. Embrace and love all of yourself - past, present, and future. Forgive yourself quickly and as often as necessary.

Forgiveness, and whether or not you grant it, has the power to affect your mental well-being. Yet, many people have difficulty forgiving the person they're never without - themselves.

Self-forgiveness, in particular, can affect your well-being for the better or worse, depending on how easily you grant it.

I do not subscribe to the old cliché, "forgive and forget"

Forgiving incapsulates the idea of not reusing the hurt to get back at the other back; as in, "but that was twenty years ago, " "yes, but you did it."

Remembering what happened - by both actor and receiver of the pain - enables the event not to be replayed.

In the PIES, forgetting/remembering is in the I, the intellect.

Forgiving is in the E and S, in the emotions and the heart.

An older 2001 study found that not forgiving yourself or others may put you at higher risk for depression. Holding on to negative emotions about yourself lowers your overall self-esteem and opens the door to anxiety and depression.

You might ask, “Why do I have a hard time with self-forgiveness?” It can be hard to forgive yourself because it requires looking at mistakes and facing uncomfortable feelings like guilt and regret.

A 2021 study, Trusted Source found that tolerance of negative feelings and confrontation with one’s behaviour is part of the self-forgiveness process.

A journey of self-forgiveness lets you step into the future without the past holding you back. We can all use a little help on the way.

Brilliant minds, from artistic to philosophical and psychological to theological, have offered thoughts and inspiring words to help you reframe self-forgiveness.

3. Its challenges

Forgiveness can be difficult for many reasons, including:

1. Forgiveness can have disadvantages, including encouraging reoffending. Forgiveness can remove unwanted consequences for offenders, such as criticism, anger, or rejection, which may discourage them from reoffending. Forgiveness can be insensitive or shaming. Forgiveness can ignore issues of diversity, such as race and gender, or the history of an abuser who tells a victim to forgive.

Forgiving someone can feel like giving up the right to justice, especially if the person who hurt you fails to ask for forgiveness.

Actually, in order to forgive, the other person’s fault must be clearly identified. Because if the fault is not identified, the object of forgiveness itself becomes unclear. Forgiveness reveals even more clearly what is wrong. However, even if you forgive someone, you can still hold them legally and ethically responsible for their crime. What changes through forgiveness is not the person’s wrongdoing, but it is your desire for revenge.

A wife who is systematically beaten by her husband should, for her own sake, forgive him, but she should definitely denounce him to the police. A girl who is being systematically raped by her father, big brother, uncle etc. needs to be helped to denounce her abuser. - before, for her own sake, be encouraged to forgive the criminal.

There are all the atrocities committed during civil wars, as during the breakup of Yugoslavia, during the appalling Rwanda massacres or now in the “Holy Land”!

In mundane damage it may be possible to put yourself in the offender’s place and understand why he/she acted as he/she did. However, it’s impossible to imagine how that could work in cases such as the WW2 Nazi atrocities, the appalling Rwanda massacres (7 Apr 1994 – 19 July 1994) or when - during the civil war in Yugoslavia (25 Jun 1991 – 28 Apr 1992) - a man came into the house of neighbours with whom he had been on friendly terms till then and proceeded to rape the wife in front of her husband and children before killing them and then killing the children. And how about the far more recent atrocities - on both sides - in the

Holy land? Historically, hurt, pain and causes of death – of individuals and communities - are spread across the whole spectrum from the infra-red to the ultra-violet.

In my naïve youth, before I learned what the Nazis actually did, what happened as Yugoslavia broke up, the Rwanda massacres, and the current horrors in The Holy Land and Sudan, I subscribed to the words of Terence (c.195-159bce) “I am human: nothing human is alien to me.” Now no more.

I may not be a very nice person. However, I cannot imagine myself behaving like that. I know God is Emmanuel and I know that sooner or later I will be born into divine eternity. Some - the ‘hard men’ – might say I am a coward. So be it. Thank God I am.

2.Trust: It can be hard to forgive someone who betrayed your trust - and to rebuild that trust.

3.Holding on to pain: After an injury, it can be difficult to release negative feelings and trust the other person again. You might also hold onto pain for comfort, validation, or to remember the event.

4.Worrying about making things worse: you might worry that bringing up old issues will make things worse.

5.Shame: You might be reluctant to forgive someone if the experience was shameful for you.

6.Feeling like you have the upper hand: not forgiving someone can make you feel like you have the upper hand.

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An email from a wife.

“My first marriage ended after five years. I moved out with my three year old daughter. And it was twelve years ago. For the last twelve years, he hasn’t visited his daughter; hasn’t paid child support (I didn’t change my email address, didn’t change my phone number, even now when we are living abroad, I still have my old phone number on roaming, just in case if he wanted to contact). He chose not to.

People who know my story told me to sue him, my lawyer wanted to take him to court and ready to fight for me. I chose not to.

I didn't fuss with him, doesn't mean I accepted what he did nor I thought he deserved to be forgiven. I just chose to forgive. Because forgiving isn't meant for the other, it's meant for me. I feel peace inside me when I let the past sleep.

Did I forget my first marriage? No. And I don't think I will ever be able to. I remember it clearly. I remember everything about it. I treasure that time. What was beautiful, will be beautiful forever. I learned valuable lessons, got stronger, and moved on. I don't forget, doesn't mean I'm still hurt. I look at it peacefully like I watch an old movie about life. The past just simply became a part of me.”

How does that move you, dear reader?

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The first complexity of forgiveness involves the question of justice. Personal or even divine magnanimity is not public justice, and it should not be permitted to override justice.

For the ordering of society, there should still be justice. Restraint and punishment are necessary even for forgiveness.

In public realms, there is very often a tension between justice and forgiveness. Personal relations can be very spontaneous, almost oblivious to rules, to law and order. However, society cannot be. That is the whole problem of Christian political ethics: how to translate the ultimate virtue of love into a social order that has stability, consistency.

Consequences of a destructive action need to be borne in mind. Punishments might persuade those thinking of doing the same not to act and risk punishments. For the sake of an individual's inner peace, forgiveness can take priority. For society to flourish, justice – and thus sanctions – have to take priority.

Comedian Richard Pryor, in one of his routines, describes how he went to Arizona State Prison in order to make a 1980 movie called *Stir Crazy*. Before that experience, he said, he had recited a standard liberal line about the injustice of prisons. But after he met some of the homicidal brutes there and found out what crimes they had committed to earn their tariff, he said he was glad they had prisons with great big bars to hold people like that. In the real world, forgiveness sometimes makes sense as sentiment, but not as social policy.

That inconsistency can be resolved by assigning the two imperatives, justice and forgiveness, to different functional levels, to that of Caesar and that of God.

Justice is a social question, while forgiveness introduces a transcendent element: love. Weighing the injunction in the Sermon on the Mount to turn the other cheek (*), Martin Luther concluded that an individual ought to obey the command, but a government should not.

There are two orders, that of the law and that of the Gospel. One forgives in one's heart, in the sight of God, but the criminal still serves his time in Caesar's jail. And yet if one assumes that the claims of God and Caesar are parallel lines, and do not connect with each other, then it is futile, or merely sentimental, to talk about how a spirit of forgiveness might come into politics and international affairs.

In any case, experience teaches that forgiveness runs somewhat against human nature. The corollary of "To err is human, to forgive divine" is that to forgive is not human, not entirely so. To forget is human, and that eventual fading of a grievance from memory, not direct forgiveness, is quite often the solution.

Where ethnic identity remains strong and is fiercely perpetuated, the logic of the blood feud reigns, and it is infinitely harder to forgive or even think of forgiving. An old wrong, a kind of primal atrocity, sits in the tribal memory like a totem, an eternal reminder. For a man to forgive his enemy would mean betraying his father and grandfather and great-grandfather, dishonouring the sacrifices that they had made. It is treason to forgive, inexcusable to forget.

(*) To minimise the damage – and deter the aggressor from going any further - I add "while lifting up your knee sharply into his groin."

So, between Armenians and Turks, Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants, between South Moluccans and Dutch, between Lebanese Maronites and Druze, between Montagues and Capulets, the ancient fury persists. The enemy is timeless. His very existence is unforgivable, but also indispensable.

Mind you, not all enmities are unreasonable. Timing obviously has much to do with whether or not forgiveness makes any sense. The deed, the source of the grievance, must be some time in the past, and the threat of further injury removed. If someone had taken a shot at a man and then ducked into the woods, still carrying a loaded gun, it would not be reasonable for the man to call after his assailant, "That's O.K.! I forgive you!"

Moreover, in all but the saintliest circles, forgiveness may be a luxury that depends upon a certain surrounding stability. It is more difficult to forgive when there is no protection against a recurrence, when there are no doors or windows on the house and one is at the mercy of every zealot and loon who cares to crawl in with a knife in his teeth. That is the barbarous condition of Gaza and Israel - as well the Sudan at the moment - places forgiveness deserted long ago.

There are in Catholic theology "the sins against the Holy Spirit." These include such offenses as despairing of salvation and obstinacy in sinning. As long as they persist, they are in some sense unforgivable. The doctrine raises interesting questions of unforgivability (if such a word should exist).

If it had been 6 million Catholics who were exterminated in the Nazi death camps, would the Pope have forgiven Adolf Eichmann? Or would he have had Eichmann hunted down, taken to Rome for trial and executed, as the Jews brought Eichmann to Jerusalem for judgment and in 1st June 1962, hanging?

The Old Testament view of forgiveness was contained in a verb that dominates its penitential literature, the Hebrew word *shuv*, meaning to turn, to return.

The doctrine implies that man has the power to turn from evil to good, to change, and the very act of turning will bring God's forgiveness.

Peter and Judas, both screwed up. One despaired, (Mt 27:3-5). The other hoped for and received forgiveness (Jn 21, 15-17).

Those who do not forgive are those who are least capable of changing the circumstances of their lives. In this sense, forgiveness is a shrewd and practical strategy for a person, or a nation, to pursue. It is the implacable, retributive tribes, like those of Northern Ireland or 'The Holy Land', that find themselves back-watered, isolated, perishing in their own fury.

The psychological case for forgiveness is overwhelmingly persuasive. As Nelson Mandela made it clear, he was convinced that not to forgive is to be imprisoned by the past.

Not to forgive is to yield oneself to another's control. If one does not forgive, then one is controlled by the other's initiatives and is locked into a sequence of act and response, of outrage and revenge, tit for tat, escalating always. The present is endlessly overwhelmed and devoured by the past. Forgiveness frees the forgiver. It extracts the forgiver from someone else's nightmare.

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Personally, I forgive God for allowing so much cruelty and physical pain as well as the gradual frailty - and the evaporation of physical beauty - as we age. As all bodies, so some brains, decay as the decades of our time on earth swell.

I understand the vital importance of human freedom and the yearning for birth into divine eternity as we get older.

I forgive God for making me impetuous and having OCD - a bit like St Paul's 'sting of the flesh' (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Being aware of my OCD prevented me from taking up golf. I knew that if I did commit myself to it, I would spend far too much time on practising so as to achieve perfection.

Being aware does not always – or instantly – prevent a nasty habit I have – which others on the 2nd floor of Vaughan House will have noticed. Humbling!

These 'weaknesses' I turn into strengths as they enable me to resonate with - and thus forgive - the weaknesses of others.

I think I understand God's strategy – and thus find forgiveness feasible.

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Strategy to help you with your own personal forgiveness could include:

- a. Practicing empathy. Try to see the situation from the other person's perspective and consider what circumstances might have led them to behave that way.
- b. Reflect, ponder and pray. Think about times when others have forgiven you, perhaps writing these in a journal.
- c. Talk to someone. Perhaps a spiritual guide or a - wise and compassionate - friend you can trust.

Forgiveness between nations.

Throughout the world we can observe numerous cases of prolonged animosity among nations. Even though most do not degenerate into warfare, these instances of national hatred make it seem as if international reconciliation is an unattainable dream, and that the most we can do is manage conflict so that all-out war does not erupt. These conflicts often involve historical national enemies, who keep alive memories of some abuse in the past. It is not uncommon that later generations feel the anger more acutely than the people who initially were wronged. Political forces can deliberately fan the flames of bitter memory in order to foster national unity and secure the favour of their domestic constituencies.

If the benefits of forgiveness on a personal level is inner healing and restoration, the benefits on a social level is restoration of relations between the nation and people and establishment of peace. Since forgiveness between nations or people require a social agreement among citizens, it is difficult to implement with only an individual's determination. Nevertheless, forgiveness is necessary to end conflicts and cease war within the global community.

Germany has continued to apologize for crimes against humanity such as the Holocaust during World War II and has been reflecting on the Nazis' mistakes. On 7 December 1970, Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of West Germany, fell on his knees in front of a memorial to the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland to apologize for the Nazi atrocities.

In 1994, Roman Herzog, former President of Germany, attended a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising and officially apologized to the citizens of Poland.

In 1995, Helmut Josef Michael Kohl, former Chancellor of Germany, visited the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland and said "this suffering and death, the pain and tears, force us to remain silent in this place." Germany's reflection did not end with apologies from politicians, but continues through abolition of the statute of limitations for Nazi war crimes, continuous court trials, and mandatory education on not repeating the past. Germany's constant apology and reflection is setting a good example for restoring relations with neighbouring countries and establishing sustainable peace.

Of course, these efforts by Germany do not change the historical atrocities of the past, nor do the victims necessarily have to forgive them. However, sincere reflection and introspection to not repeat the past that was wrong and genuine apologies accompanied by a solution is not easy even for an individual. Apology and forgiveness that Germany has showed on a national level will be remembered as an excellent example of peace and coexistence.

I have discovered that - perhaps in no small measure thanks to these efforts - Poles hate Russia far more than Germany. Russia has not yet apologised for its own WW2 atrocities.

Every sensible person in the global community certainly wants peace than war. Understanding and forgiveness can break the vicious cycle of retaliation that is constantly spread around the world. It also has the power to lead a new era of peace. Let us first forgive those around us and put peace into practice. Forgiveness is difficult but is courageous. The world will become brighter and brighter with the light of peace even from attempting to forgive, and putting forgiveness into practice will heal us and the world.

4. Learning it.

Blaise Pascal(1623-62, French mathematician, physicist, religious philosopher, and master of prose) made it clear he thought that "To understand is to forgive."

And Alexander Chase(1843-88) taught us that, "to understand is to forgive, even oneself." According to a study published by the National Opinion Research Center, Chicago, in 2015, just 60% of married individuals claimed to be happy within their marriage. So, before you capsize an otherwise happy relationship, make sure you address – and apologise for - these 30 annoying issues that may be irritating your husband or your wife. Forgiveness can enable a relationship to survive.

Over my more than 55 years of priesthood, I have learned that quite a few couples set aside a day – typically last Saturday morning of the month – to let each other know what upset them over the past four weeks. Clearing the decks of unhappy rubble enables them to start a new month feeling fresh.

Things that – typically – annoy the husband.

1. Taking a long time to get ready.
2. Keeping the house at an unbearable temperature According to researchers in the Netherlands, women are typically more comfortable at temperatures a few degrees warmer than their male counterparts. To avoid any conflict in this scenario, rather than dialling up the thermostat a few degrees anytime you get the chance, reach a compromise, or put on a sweater if you are indeed feeling that cold.
3. Criticising your own body
4. Getting jealous over his platonic relationships.
5. Saying things are okay when they're clearly not.
6. Assuming he's paying Start going Dutch, or take him out from time to time.
7. Organizing the home according to your logic – so he can't find things as they are not where he left them.
8. Refusing to compromise – on what programmes to watch on TV.
9. Criticizing his driving.
10. Asking about his whereabouts 24/7.

Things that tend to annoy the wife.

1. Only pretending to listen to what she is saying.
2. Leaving your wet towel and dirty clothes scattered everywhere. I clearly remember how a wife taught her husband to put his dirty clothes in the linen basket. “Darling, there are no clean shirts in the cupboard.” “That’s because there were no dirty one in the linen basket.” That man changed his habit instantly.
3. Not wiping out the sink after you shave.
4. Snoring. Quite a few couples I know, ended up – after a few years – sleeping in different rooms.
5. Acting like a complete baby when you have even a slight sniffle.
6. Forgetting your anniversary, or her birthday. (Keep a perpetual diary – and look at it every month!).
7. Showing more affection to your kids than to her.
8. Responding to “Do I look fat in this?” with anything but “You look beautiful
9. Leaving the toilet seat up.
10. Not caring about your appearance.

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The past is a rehearsal for the present.

The 4 R's of active forgiveness are

Responsibility: Accept what has happened and show yourself compassion.

Remorse: Use guilt and remorse as a gateway to positive behaviour change.

Restoration: Make amends with whomever you're forgiving, even if it's yourself.

Renewal: Learn from the experience and grow as a person.

Forgiveness should be given by the "golden rule" (Matt. 7:12). One should always be willing to forgive - even at repeated offenses. Matthew 18:21-23 has the apostle Peter asking, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Reconciliation – receptive forgiveness has three elements: Reconciliation is often a long, sometimes painful process. It is a journey not confined to, but completed in, sacramental celebration, can be summed up in terms of three C's: conversion, confession and celebration.

We are told that making a good confession of one's wrongdoing requires the following - CONFESS elements:

C: Confess, without making any excuses, what we did wrong - and name the wrongdoing specifically.

O: Offer of a genuine apology. An apology involves taking responsibility and expressing remorse and contrition. Most importantly, we must get across the idea that we are truly remorseful and contrite, ashamed, guilty, and disappointed, even if we do not say explicitly the words "I'm sorry." The key is to communicate the sadness and sorrow for having done the hurtful or offensive act.

N: Note the pain of the other person. We need to express empathy for the person we're asking forgiveness from and show that we understand their experience. It also helps to describe what we perceive them experiencing and suffering in a way that suggests that we understand their perspective and emotional experience and can even identify with them had we been in the same situation.

F: Forever value the relationship. It is important to express how resolving the relationship problems is more valuable to us than winning or being right and that we are willing to offer to sacrifice whatever is necessary to resolve the difficulty.

E: Equalize through restitution. However uncomfortable, we need to ask if there is anything that can be done to make up for the wrongdoing. We do need to resist making suggestions of restitution as people understand love in different ways and value different things as an expression of it. Then, we need to be willing to do the restitution or negotiate something comparable.

S: Say we will never do it again. We need to also express how we will never try to hurt him or her in the same way ever again.

S: Seek forgiveness by explicitly asking for it as in: “Can you ever forgive me for hurting you?”

Just as important as defining what forgiveness *is*, though, is understanding what forgiveness is *not*. Experts who study or teach forgiveness make clear that when you forgive, you do not gloss over or deny the seriousness of an offense against you.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it mean condoning or excusing offenses. Though forgiveness can help repair a damaged relationship, it doesn’t obligate you to reconcile with the person who harmed you, or release them from legal accountability.

Instead, forgiveness brings the forgiver peace of mind and frees him or her from corrosive anger.

While there is some debate over whether true forgiveness requires positive feelings toward the offender, experts agree that it at least involves letting go of deeply held negative feelings. In that way, it empowers you to recognize the pain you suffered without letting that pain define you, enabling you to heal and move on with your life.

Another method for practicing asking for forgiveness involves reflecting on a time when we were forgiven. We can recall a time when we hurt someone else, either intentionally or accidentally. Then we can engage in a discussion on whether or not we feel forgiven for the offense.

If we feel we’ve been forgiven, there are benefits to reflecting on this further by asking questions like:

How do we know we’ve been forgiven?

Why do we think the person forgave us?

Do we think the person we hurt felt better or worse after they forgave us?

How did we feel after we were forgiven?

What is our relationship like with the person now?

Did this experience make us more or less likely to repeat the hurtful behaviour?

What did we learn from the whole ordeal?

If we do not feel that we’ve been forgiven, it may be helpful to talk about how we might ask for forgiveness.

8 Tips and Techniques for When It Feels Too Hard to Forgive

Forgiveness is a complex process of change, and although beneficial it cannot be accomplished by simple means.

It requires sustained effort and commitment and is often more difficult than giving into unforgiveness.

Here are a few exercises that can help when it feels too hard to forgive.

1. Sympathy for the Transgressor

Sometimes it will simply be impossible to empathize with the transgressor, particularly in case of unexpected betrayals or heinous harms.

A realistic and legitimate goal in those cases will be simply the cultivation of sympathy. A therapist could invite the client to speculate about reasons for and ways in which they can feel sorry for the person who inflicted the harm.

A practitioner could also ask the client to think of what kind of help the offender might be given and if there are nice things that people could do to help this person.

Although not easy, the intent of this intervention is to stimulate even the smallest amount of thoughts of compassion toward the transgressor.

2. An Aid to Facilitating Forgiveness

Writing about the benefits of forgiveness can help us move on from the I to the E and S in our PIES of life.

Painful guilt, self-blame, or regret can often hold us back from growing stronger when we're the ones who need forgiveness.

But feeling better and letting go of our own past mistakes requires self-forgiveness, and a commitment to learning from the experience.

Often, writing a letter of self-forgiveness can help with that healing, and give us a chance to cultivate a more compassionate relationship with ourselves.

Blaming yourself for a wound inflicted deliberately, as revenge or out of jealousy or for your own benefit, as distinct from one inflicted involuntarily, by accident or because it didn't occur to you that it would hurt the other person.

So many types of self-blame for acts of which you are innocent but feel guilty out of shame or because you think you must be responsible in some way: typical of sexual aggression especially by respected figures - fathers, scout-masters, priests etc. As we have been hearing more and more often recently, such self-blame can poison a whole life.

Why not try this four-step approach to crafting your own self-forgiveness narrative and begin to move forward?

1. Taking Responsibility
2. Showing Remorse
3. Rectifying Mistakes, and
4. Releasing Past Hurt.

All you will need is a quiet place and some time to reflect on the past actions that are holding you back, as well as how you might go about forgiving yourself for the hurt you currently feel.

3. Lessen the Injustice Gap

To reduce the perceived injustice gap and unforgiveness people often attempt to cope through problem-solving or regulating emotions by self-soothing, avoiding the thoughts, replacing of negative with positive emotions, and finding meaning.

We can change the magnitude of the injustice gap through two strategies. A victim can introduce more justice by changing how one perceives things as they currently are. Alternatively, a victim can lower expectations about the ideal outcome. Usually, one cannot fully exact justice.

Although people can mouth the words that a situation is merely challenging, the physiological threat appraisals are notoriously unresponsive to wilful changes. A tip from the solution-focused therapists suggests that we should find what might be working, even to a small degree and try to magnify that positive perspective.

4. Short-Circuit Rumination

Rumination - going over the past time and again - can trigger negative emotions. If we spot rumination quickly, we can usually ‘change channel’ – and concentrate on something else.

5. Emotional Replacement

Replacing negative unforgiving emotions gradually with positive other-oriented emotions is facilitated by experiencing other self-forgetful positive emotions.

The therapist facilitates emotional replacement by helping the client give an altruistically motivated gift of forgiveness.

The practitioner can use a memory described by the client to motivate altruism through:

- a. humility in realizing that the client too has offended,
- b. contrition over his or her wrongdoing,
- c. gratitude for having been forgiven, and

d. hope from the expectation that we can all do something good for others, even those who have hurt us, and that blessing will come back to us.
Clients are basically directed to reflect on their past to recall times in which they offended another but were forgiven.

These times can be difficult to recall. The therapist can give prompts to think of whether the client offended a parent, teacher, romantic partner, friend, or coworker.

Usually, with these prompts, people can recall many experiences where they wronged someone and were forgiven.

6. Empty Chair Technique

One of the most effective ways to help a client experience empathy is to use the empty-chair technique. The client imagines sitting across from the offender, who is imagined to be sitting in the empty chair.

The client describes his or her complaint as if the offender were there. The client then moves to the empty chair and responds from the point of view of the offender.

The conversation proceeds with the client moving back and forth between chairs. The objective is to allow the person to express both sides of the conversation personally, and thus experience empathy.

In doing so, the person might imagine an apology or at least an acknowledgment of the hurt that was inflicted.

Activities and Exercises to Help Practice Forgiveness

The activities and exercises below can be used by anyone alone but can also be used as interventions with the help of a practitioner.

1. Seeking empathy.

A key to helping someone forgive and develop empathy for the transgressor is to help them take the perspective of the other person. It can help you to write these five **Ps** on a sheet of paper as a cue:

Pressures: What were the situational pressures that made the person behave the way he or she did?

Past: What were the background factors contributing to the person acting the way he or she did?

Personality: What are the events in the person's life that lead to the person having the personality that he or she does?

Provocations: What were my own provocative behaviours? Alternatively, might the other person, from his or her point of view, perceive something I did as a provocation?

Plans: What were the person's good intentions? Did the person want to help me, correct me, or have in mind that he or she thought would be good for me, but his or her behaviour did not have that effect? In fact, did it had just the opposite effect?

2. Fantasizing About Apology

Research has shown that people who can generate such fantasies and vividly imagine the offender apologizing and being deeply remorseful are ones who are most likely to forgive successfully.

Those who cannot imagine such scenarios are often unable to forgive without some form of justice actually being involved, or without a large amount of work to promote experiences of empathy, sympathy, compassion, or love.

3. Mindfulness - a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.

Positively linked to forgiveness, especially when it comes to forgiveness towards others, mindfulness can help – especially when seen as an energy exchange where forgiveness frees up energy for mindful engagement.

Both mindfulness and forgiveness have been linked to greater psychological health..
Cultivating forgiveness promotes mindfulness and therefore better health.

4. Naikan Therapy

Naikan Therapy focuses on distinguishing between first the actual memories we have, second the interpretations we give them, and finally how we develop the sense of self as a result.

The self is shaped by the narrative of the past we create, and our memory is deeply influenced by how we see ourselves through the judgments we make about our past.

Our memory, being a subjective experience, is often static and we are convinced that ours is the only valid perspective and we often accept it as an absolute.

“A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labours of other men, living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the measure as I have received and am still receiving.” Stated Albert Einstein (1879-1955).

To develop a fluid sense of self would take a lot of energy if we had to do it all the time. However, if the static memories are built around a painful past, often the only way to recreate the past is to take a dynamic approach.

The Naikan method suggests that taking another perspective on the painful memory is the answer, and particularly from the other person's point of view by asking other focused questions: “*What have you received? What have you given? What troubles and difficulties have you caused?*”

5. Roleplay Forgiveness

Forgiveness can also be practiced through roleplay. We can pick a family member to be the forgiver and ask them to describe a particular person that they blame for something hurtful.

Then we stand in the offender's shoes and ask questions like: Why might he have done what he did? What emotions might he have been feeling? The forgiver is encouraged to see the broadest picture possible, to give the offender the benefit of the doubt, and to imagine different things that the offender might have been going through.

It is important to remember here that practicing empathy is not the same as excusing bad behaviour, but that it is simply a technique for letting go of anger. Then role-play forgiving by verbally expressing forgiveness to the offender.

It helps to pay attention to emotions we are feeling as we do the role-play and even try on the facial expressions that we might have when expressing forgiveness. Finally, we want to bring attention to what our body feels like when we're feeling or expressing forgiveness.

6. Write a Forgiveness Letter

Write in a letter - that we may or may not ever send to the person who hurt us - about a time when we were hurt. Illustrate how we were affected by it at the time and the hurtful or negative feelings we are still experiencing.

State what we wish the offender had done instead. End this forgiveness letter with an explicit statement of forgiveness, understanding, and even empathy if we can muster it. Another variation of the forgiveness letter would be to write a letter as if we were the offender.

7. Combining these strategies.

Unforgiveness might be reduced most effectively by using several different strategies.

Sometimes, in the spirit of handling negative emotions, a person might emotionally forgive. Both strategies might be simultaneously or sequentially employed.

The 4 Ds of Forgiveness

The process of forgiveness can take place both internally and externally.

Internally, we go through emotional changes in which negative feelings and thoughts are let go of – we decide to put our hurt, anger, and resentment in the past.

Interpersonal forgiveness, while not necessarily required, can involve trying to put ourselves in the wrongdoer's shoes and seeing things from their perspective. Often, it can help us feel more positive toward ourselves and the person we are trying to forgive.

The 4 Ds of Forgiveness introduces four steps through the forgiveness process. They are:

1. **Discovering meaning Deep-Diving:** Developing more insight regarding the offense and its present impacts.

2. **Deciding:** Considering what forgiveness means and electing to forgive – or not.

3. **Doing:** Taking the transgressor's perspective in an attempt to understand their motives and reconcile with your feelings.

4. **Deepening:** Discovering meaning in the event and how you have grown from it.

The 4 Ds of Forgiveness invite the reader to consider the transgression and their decision to forgive from several perspectives: emotionally, psychologically, practically, and behaviourally.

Confessing: Seeking Forgiveness

Confessing offers to a Catholic a sacramental process of seeking forgiveness.

1. Confessing to the wrongdoing, being specific, and without offering excuses.
2. Offering a genuine apology
3. Saying we will never repeat the wrong or attempt to hurt the other person, and
4. Seeking forgiveness by explicitly asking for it.

Moving Toward Self-Forgiveness

The inability to move past guilt and self-doubt can take its toll on our daily lives. Particularly, struggling to forgive ourselves for our actions can be damaging to self-esteem; the more we suffer, the greater the potential impacts on our productivity, mood, and state of mind.

Whether you are able to make amends for your actions or not, self-forgiveness can be liberating and empowering. This exercise involves:

- a. Specifically defining what you'd like to forgive yourself for
- b. Identifying the negative emotions you'd like to release
- c. Acknowledging the benefits of self-forgiveness – for yourself, and for others, and
- d. Making a dedicated commitment to forgive yourself and accept the benefits that come with it.

To move towards forgiving yourself, it is important also to be compassionate and act kindly to yourself in moments of struggle.

Compassion is often aimed at other people, making it easy to forget that you also need kindness from yourself. Acknowledging your pain with acceptance and understanding, rather than judgment and criticism, honours your humanness.

If you struggle to give yourself the self-compassion you deserve, try to reminisce about a difficult situation in your life and notice the emotional discomfort in your body.

Remind yourself that this is a moment of suffering, which is painful and stressful. Acknowledge that this pain is a part of life and that you are not alone.

Lastly, put your hands over your heart, and give yourself the forgiveness, strength, or patience that you need to be self-compassionate.

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Understanding others is the ability to recognise and relate to another person's feelings, perspective, and experiences and thus their motivations. It's a valuable skill that can help you build connections with others, communicate effectively, and develop empathy.

It is not easy to decide to forgive someone who has hurt you. Even if you are determined to forgive, you are often not able to forgive in your heart. Thorough understanding is needed. It is difficult to completely forgive someone without true understanding. We need to understand the incident, understand the perpetrator and understand our self.

Here are some ways to understand others: their feelings, perceptions, weaknesses and strengths

a. Try to see the world from another person's point of view, and consider the thoughts and experiences that shape their emotions. This is different from empathy, which is understanding and sharing someone's emotions, and sympathy, which is feeling sorry for someone without understanding their perspective.

b. Pay close attention to what someone is saying, both verbally and non-verbally. This includes their tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Ask questions to clarify, reflect on what you hear, and try to understand the meaning behind their words. You can also try to clear your mind of other things and fully focus on what they're saying.

c. Take a genuine interest in people as individuals, including their strengths, fears, and concerns.

d. Be able to accept that someone else's point of view may be different from yours, even if you disagree with what they've chosen to do.

To understand anyone, we need to sit inside their heart, their innermost self, to see and hear what is there. That takes time. It calls for patience.

Engaged couples do well to commit their time and attention to this - as does anyone with a grudge or anger. Understanding may turn enemies into allies if not friends.

Teaching it.

To motivate those you are trying to learn forgiveness, draw their attention to the numerous benefits of forgiveness. It can help us let go of the past and move on with our lives, free from negative emotions. It allows us to restore our relationships with others. It can also improve physical and mental health, reduce stress and anxiety, and even lower our risk of heart disease.

Forgiveness - be it active or receptive - is not always easy. It can be challenging to let go of the hurt and anger we feel toward someone who has harmed us. And it can be even harder to

forgive ourselves – and accept forgiveness from others, including God, when we have made mistakes and hurt others.

When in touch with others – be that contact physical, intellectual or emotional – I try to bear in mind Mt 25,40:”whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you did it to me.” Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, with us in all of us – whether we acknowledge that or not.

The good news is that forgiveness is a skill that can be learned and practiced. Parents and teachers - including friends - may use these few suggestions to help their ‘pupils’ acquire the virtue of forgiveness.

1. Acknowledge feelings. It's important to recognize and acknowledge the hurt, anger, and other negative emotions towards the person or situation you want to forgive. This will help you to understand and process your feelings and to begin the process of letting go.
2. Practice empathy. Try to understand the other person's perspective and feelings. This does not mean you have to excuse or justify their behaviour, but it can help you understand why they may have acted the way they did.
3. Let go of blame. Forgiveness is not about placing accountability or responsibility on anyone. It's about letting go of the need to assign blame, and instead, focusing on healing and moving forward.
4. Practice self-compassion. Be kind and understanding with yourself as you work through the process of forgiveness. Remember that forgiving others and yourself may take time – and thus needs you to be patient.
5. Act. Forgiveness is not just a feeling; it's also an action. If you have hurt someone, ask for forgiveness. Apologise. If someone has hurt you, try to act as Nelson Mandela with the South African authorities - or Pope John Paul 2 with Mehmet Ali Ağca. Then you can move forward – into freedom and joy.

Forgiveness is a journey which may be short or long.

Bear in mind that forgiveness is complex and may not always be possible, especially if the person caused the harm and pain is unwilling to apologise or to make amends. Sometimes, for some, the hurt may be too great to forgive – especially if the offender refuses to apologise or show contrition.

When forgiveness is possible, it can be the key that unlocks the door to peace, understanding, and reconciliation that is genuinely transformative.

You may have noticed how children have great memories. They know song lyrics, can quote movies and books, and even remind you of things you had completely forgotten. While this gift of memory is usually a great asset, it can make it hard for them to forgive those who have wronged them.

We all know that children who learned to forgive live happier and healthier lives than those who hold grudges. So, it is worthwhile teaching them the five tactics in your strategy for forgiveness.

1. Teach them to forgive quickly.

I do not subscribe to the old cliché "forgive and forget". Forgiving contains the conviction of never reusing – reminding – the offender; as in "but that was twenty years ago" "yes, but you did it."

Remembering what happened - by both actor and receiver of the pain - enables the event not to be replayed.

In the PIES, forgetting/remembering is in the I, the intellect.

Forgiving is in the E And S, in the emotions and the heart.

While we are not God, God is our example of how we are to forgive others: completely and with no record of wrongs. Often when we hold a grudge, we rehearse the offense in our minds so much it becomes impossible to forget. Choosing to forgive quickly is just one way we can help ourselves to both forgive *and* forget.

2. Teach that forgiveness is holy.

Teach that forgiveness isn't an option. God commands us to forgive. The Bible says in Colossians 3:13 "...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to say, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). If we ask to be forgiven to the same extent that we have forgiven others, but we haven't forgiven others, then we're asking to not be forgiven at all! Remind kids that every time they choose to forgive others, they are allowing themselves, too, to also be forgiven when they sin.

3. Teach that though forgiveness may be hard but it is good and creative.

There's no way around it: forgiveness involves absorbing pain - something that can be hard for those who have a keen sense of justice. If someone does something wrong, it's only fair that they suffer the consequences, right? Well, yes and no.

When we forgive someone and don't demand they apologize or pay for what they did, there is always an element of pain that has to be absorbed. It hurts that we should have to feel that pain for someone else's sin, and it will continue to hurt our sense of justice, unless we choose to absorb it.

When we choose to forgive someone, we can hand that pain of injustice to Jesus, thank Him for absorbing pain for us, and be at peace about the hurt we experienced. After all, often even if someone does apologize or have consequences, it doesn't seem like enough to our sense of fairness, so choosing to absorb the pain like Jesus did is the most helpful thing we can do — both for ourselves and for the offender.

4. Teach that forgiveness doesn't equal trust.

Teach that forgiveness is not the same as trust. Forgiveness is something given; trust is something earned. Children need to understand that even though they are supposed to forgive all people when they wrong us, not all people are trustworthy. The kind of people they can

trust are those who consistently have integrity, do right, apologize for their actions, and learn from their mistakes. Forgiving someone does not mean we have to trust them, and this is especially true when the offense is serious.

Forgiveness need not be followed by friendship. It doesn't mean they should spend time with the offender afterwards, nor does it mean that the bully or abuser should go unpunished.

Forgiveness is the personal choice to no longer hold onto bitterness - whether the offender ever says they are sorry or not. It is not a free pass for the offender to avoid all consequences of their actions. In fact, sometimes the best thing a child can do is tell on someone to a higher authority, like a parent or teacher, so the offender can face justice and learn to become a trustworthy person.

5. Teach that forgiveness brings freedom.

Teach your pupils that forgiveness has clear benefits. It is 'enlightened self-interest' which brings many physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual benefits, whereas bitterness can damage health.

While forgiveness generates peace, comfort, love, and joy, people with grudges are a pain – to those in their vicinity!

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Witty Oscar Wilde(1854-1900) reminded us that “ Some people cause happiness wherever they go; others - those with grudges - whenever they go.”

Forgiveness is a powerful tool that leads to a sense of peace, and can be helpful in many areas of your life. Like Buddha(563 to 483bce) once said, “Holding onto anger is like drinking poison, and expecting the other to die.”

Being attached to negative emotions like anger and bitterness ultimately hurts the individual holding onto them. When it comes to your children, you want to teach them how to forgive at an early age in hopes they can continue using these practices throughout their lives. These 7 tips for teaching your pupils about forgiveness can help them learn to let go of grudges and lead happier lives.

1: Focus on what you hope to achieve.

In order to teach your children about forgiveness, it is first important to ensure you understand true forgiveness yourself. Forgiveness stems from a life where you consciously choose to take things less personally, and make a mindful decision to practice forgiveness daily. It is an emotional process of taking responsibility of your emotional health, thus freeing yourself from past hurts. Forgiveness is the process of reigning in the negative impulses that arise within when someone upsets you, and choosing to treat that person with kindness instead.

2. Teach communication skills.

It should come as no surprise that healthy communication is an important factor in friendships or any relationship. Making eye contact, and forcing yourself to stop and listen - so as to hear - will help you to lead by example, and pass these skills along to your offspring.

3. Teach how to handle anger.

Children can learn to forgive at a very young age, as well as how to cope with anger. Establishing a home with a sense of peace where forgiveness is a common practice that can help children learn to squash anger before it takes root and becomes a daily part of their lives. A child can often feel unsafe in a home where anger is prolific. If you think your child is struggling to deal with anger or you feel rage is too common of a practice in your household, you can seek family counselling where dealing with anger can be taught in a healthy way.

4. Lead by example.

Children are likely to repeat the actions they witness parents doing, rather than simply listen to what the parents are verbally commanding them to do. This can be seen from a very early age when toddlers learn through imitating their parents' behaviours. When forgiveness is a common practice that children can see among parents to one another, or from parents to friends and extended family members, an environment exists where children can learn by example.

5. Teach aggressive- passive balance.

Help your children understand how to strike a healthy balance of not allowing themselves to be treated poorly, yet still practising compassion. For example, it could be considered unhealthy to allow the same friend to repeat the same hurtful behaviour and forgive this friend over and over without the friend exhibiting the slightest sign of remorse. One's self-respect can even begin to deteriorate when an ongoing pattern of hurtfulness then forgiveness occurs. Conversely, you can teach your children about empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. When you teach your kids to "put yourself in their shoes" when it comes to forgiveness, this can help them to quickly identify that a well-meaning friend who shows remorse should be forgiven.

6. Teach strategy – perhaps using heroes such as Nelson Mandela and St John Paul 2.

The art of forgiving is a necessary step to establishing long term friendships, but knowing when to forgive and move on can be hard to determine at times. Holding onto every wrongdoing or offence can add up and lead to a bitter life with little sense of trust.

If it only happened one time, and it probably will not happen again, let it go.

If your friend did not do it on purpose, let it go.

If it was not that bad, let it go.

If your friend is sincerely sorry, let it go.

If it was just a mistake, and the friend is usually kind, let it go.

If it happened more than a month ago, definitely let it go.

Guidelines like these can help you steer your children in the direction of having healthy, long-term friendships. However, sometimes letting go of something is the right thing to do simply so it will not weigh down the individual, even if it does not seem like the other person is deserving of being forgiven.

7. Seek professional guidance.

Challenges in forgiving are not something you want to pass onto your children. To live happier lives, children need to learn how to forgive and not dwell in the pits of bitterness.

Whether you feel your family needs some direction on handling anger issues, improving communication, or simply learning how to revamp your forgiveness practices, contact the caring and compassionate staff at Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS).

The most effective way to contact the CEAS team is via email:

RC-DCS-HQ-CEAS@mod.gov.uk

Emails are checked every working day and allocated to case workers to provide the required action.

If parents would prefer to speak to a member of the team – please indicate this in your email and a staff member will call you as soon as they possibly can

Effects of forgiveness

Confession generates reconciliation. Thus, what years ago we called “going to confession, now people say, 'I am going to the sacrament of reconciliation," concentrating on the outcome not the process.

Forgiveness can lead to healthier relationships, improved mental health, less anxiety, stress and hostility; fewer symptoms of depression, lower blood pressure, stronger immune systems, improved heart health and even self-esteem.

If only Muslims, Jews and Christian could forgive each other for the past, hope would be conceived and even - eventually- born.

7. Its presence in the Arts

a. Cinema

- 1. What Remains
2022

A small town pastor is forced to reckon with an act of forgiveness when the convict he forgave for murdering his wife returns to town five years later, while the town sheriff investigates another murder that may be related.

Director Nathan Scoggins. Stars Anne Heche, Kellan Lutz, Cress Williams

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2. The Shack

2017

A grieving man receives a mysterious, personal invitation to meet with God at a place called "The Shack."

Director Stuart Hazeldine. Stars Sam Worthington, Octavia Spencer, Tim McGraw

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3. Philomena

2013

A world-weary political journalist picks up the story of a woman's search for her son, who was taken away from her decades ago after she became pregnant and was forced to live in a convent.

Director Stephen Frears. Stars Judi Dench, Steve Coogan, Sophie Kennedy Clark.

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4. Mass
2021

The parents of both the shooter and one of the victims of a school shooting tragedy agree to meet and talk in an attempt to move forward.

Director Fran Kranz. Stars Jason Isaacs, Martha Plimpton, Ann Dowd.

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5. War Room
2015

A seemingly perfect family looks to fix their problems with the help of Miss Clara, an older, wiser woman.

Director Alex Kendrick. Stars Priscilla C. Shirer, T.C. Stallings, Karen Abercrombie.

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6. I Can Only Imagine
2018

The inspiring and unknown true story behind Mercy Me's beloved, chart topping song that brings ultimate hope to so many is a gripping reminder of the power of true forgiveness.

Director Andrew Erwin Jon Erwin. Stars John Michael Finley, Madeline Carroll, Dennis Quaid.

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7. A Heart That Forgives

2016 Follow two foster brothers that choose separate paths. Malcolm follows his father's footsteps and begins pastoring a small church while Silk follows a path of darkness attempting redemption at his own convenience.

Director M. Legend Brown. Stars Mario Mims, Charles Malik, Whitfield Carl, Anthony Payne II

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8. The Hero

2017

An ailing movie star comes to terms with his past and mortality.

Director Brett Haley. Stars Sam Elliott, Laura Prepon, Krysten Ritter.

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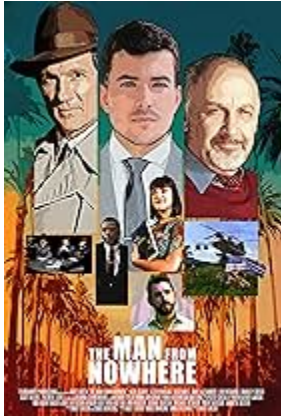


9. Atonement

2007

Thirteen-year-old fledgling writer Briony Tallis irrevocably changes the course of several lives when she accuses her older sister's lover of a crime he did not commit.

Director Joe Wright. Stars Keira Knightley, James McAvoy, Brenda Blethyn.



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10. The Man from Nowhere
2021

Upon learning of a cancer diagnosis, a New York Times best-selling author pens his final novel in a last ditch attempt to reconnect with his estranged son before it's too late.

b. Hymns

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

3 O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

4 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

5 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!

By John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92)

1 Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

2 Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us:
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us,
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
lone and dreary, faint and weary,
through the desert thou didst go.

3 Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
love with every passion blending,
pleasure that can never cloy:
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

By J Edmeston (1791-1867)

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name;
I've been born again in Jesus' name;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share His love as He told me to.

He said: 'freely, freely, you have received;
freely, freely give.
Go, in My name,
and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'

All pow'r is giv'n in Jesus' name,
in earth and heav'n in Jesus' name;
and in Jesus' name I come to You
to share His pow'r as He told me to.

God gives us life in Jesus' name,
He lives in us in Jesus' name;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share His peace as He told me to.

By Carol Owens (1937-2024)

'Forgive our sins as we forgive',
you taught us, Lord, to pray;
but you alone can grant us grace
to live the words we say.

2. How can your pardon reach and bless
the unforgiving heart
that broods on wrongs and will not let
old bitterness depart?

3. In blazing light your cross reveals
the truth we dimly know:
what trivial debts are owed to us,
how great our debt to you!

4. Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love,
our lives will spread your peace. By Rosalind Herklots (1905-87)

1.O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!*

2. When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

3. And when I think that God—his Son not sparing —
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin:

4. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home—what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art! By Carl Boberg (1850-1940)
tr. Stuart K Hine

c. Books

“The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World
by Desmond Tutu

“Communicating Forgiveness: On Forgiveness: How Can We Forgive the Unforgivable?”

In this inspiring work, Richard Holloway tackles the great theme of forgiveness. It is a subject that he explores in the widest context but underpinning this examination is his belief that religion has given us many of the best stories and metaphors for the act.

“Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving”, by Robert Enright.

A self-help book that demonstrates how forgiveness can benefit the forgiver more than the forgiven, and can help people who are hurt by others and feel anger, depression, and resentment.

“Forgiveness” by Marina Cantacuzino, examines our relationship with yourself, with others, and with the world. A thought-provoking book that encourages readers to examine their hearts and release bitterness and victimhood to live in peace with themselves and others

“The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hosseini.

A book about forgiveness in which the main character, Amir, spends most of his life trying to forgive himself for not helping his friend during an assault.

“The Berenstain Bears and the Forgiving Tree” by Stan and Jan Berenstain

A children's book about one of the Berenstain Bears who realizes he was selfish and mean to his brother, and they both learn to forgive each other

“Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?” by Timothy Keller, a pastor and New York Times bestselling author, who explores the profound necessity of forgiveness in our lives. He highlights how difficult it is to forgive and the consequences of not forgiving, emphasizing forgiveness as an essential skill, moral imperative, and a religious belief central to our humanity.

“The Forgiveness Garden”, by Lauren Thompson, is a story about the spiritual journey of forgiveness that conveys a message that anyone can relate to, young or old

“The One-in-a-Million Boy” by Monica Wood, is a literary story about friendship, love, forgiveness, and the power of dreams .

The Gift of Forgiveness: Inspiring Stories from Those Who Have Overcome the Unforgivable.

Katherine Schwarzenegger Pratt explores the transformative nature of forgiveness through personal stories, sharing intimate insights, poignant quotes, and profound wisdom. The book, with its lived experiences of forgiveness, serves as a guide for readers seeking acceptance, grace, and peace through the act of forgiveness.

d. Opera

The dramatic and musical climax in *The Marriage of Figaro*, act 2, perhaps Mozart's operatic masterpiece, is famously marked by the unexpected forgiveness of the Count by the Countess, whom the count has infamously refused to forgive earlier in the opera.

“Let all be forgiven. Let all hearts proclaim the healing power of love!”

e. Poems

Forgiveness by Emily Dickinson (1830-86)

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;
So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,
One summer Sabbath day I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial-place;
Where, pondering how all human love and hate
Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave!

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A wise man gives what he cannot keep
To accomplish what he can never lose.

All through life we make our judgments
Praying for the right path to choose.

Believers feel God is never far away
With His love, forgiveness and power.
All we have to do is observe His word
And by faith we overcome and flower.

Never be afraid to pray humbly to God
For His light to shine from your face.
The more we surrender and obey His will
The more we are blessed His Grace.

Life without faith, love & forgiveness
Becomes a selfish person's hell.
By severing our Lord without doubt
We stay true to overcome and prevail.

The Lord is aware of all our desires
Our secrets, joys, evils and fears.
Loving us despite our repeated mistakes
And even more, when we cry out in tears.

Our trust and confidence in Divine will
Helps guide us through every moment and hour.
Fidelity to one's promise and obedience to law
Let's our Lord know we heed His call! By Tom Zart (born 1945 in Kansas)

8.Its presence in lives of famous people.

Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) was a leader who transformed the world with his philosophy of forgiveness and reconciliation. As South Africa's first black president, he was able to end apartheid, a system of institutionalized racial segregation that had been in place for decades. Mandela's approach to leadership was rooted in his belief that forgiveness is a powerful force that can bring about healing and transformation. In this blog post, we will explore the power of forgiveness in leadership and the lessons we can learn from Mandela's example.

One of Mandela's most powerful acts of forgiveness occurred shortly after his release from prison in 1990. Instead of seeking revenge on his former oppressors, Mandela worked to build a new South Africa based on equality and reconciliation. He famously said, "As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

Called the “Man of Forgiveness” by The New York Times, Archbishop Tutu(1831-2021) is the author of several books including: No Future without Forgiveness and The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World.

Rep. John Lewis(1940-2020) a black man who was beaten and insulted in the civil rights movement, argued that George Wallace, the surly segregationist Alabama politician, deserved forgiveness.

A co-founder and chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Lewis led and helped organize many of the seminal moments in the Civil Rights movement, including the Freedom Rides, the 1963 March on Washington, and the Selma to Montgomery Marches.

On the evening of June 17, 2015, a mass shooter took the lives of nine African American people at a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The massacre at a historic Black church deeply shook a nation already jaded by frequent gun violence and heralded a new chapter of violent white nationalism in America.

The forgiveness of these family members inspired citizens and politicians to take action and remove the Confederate flag - which is associated with the racist ideology of the perpetrator and the trauma of slavery.

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Mark Stephens, 44, attacked Rita Stephens, 67, at their home in Pencoed on 19 June 2015 after a drinking session when she criticised the way he ran the family furniture firm.

He told Swansea Crown Court he "snapped" after an argument over business debts.

He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to a minimum of 20 years.

Martin Stephens forgave his twin brother who stabbed their mother to death after a drunken rage - and visited him in prison.

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Nelson Mandela’s name is synonymous with forgiveness. Mandela said that “Forgiveness liberates the soul, it removes fear. That’s why it’s such a powerful weapon.” His lifestyle of reconciliation, love and forgiveness is worth mentioning. Instead of revenge and retribution, he chose to forgive and made peace with his captors and jailors; those who engaged in terrible atrocities against the non-white population in South Africa. Mandela received numerous honours, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for his impeccable forgiving lifestyle. Mandela’s lifestyle of forgiveness is an example to the entire human race.

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Few individuals in the history of the American civil rights movement cast as long a shadow as Representative John Lewis (1940–2020).

John Lewis, a black man who was beaten and insulted in the civil rights movement, argued that George Wallace, the surly segregationist Alabama politician, deserved forgiveness.

Born in rural Alabama as the son of sharecroppers, Lewis first gained fame (at least in his hometown newspaper) by preaching a sermon at his family church before even turning 16. John Lewis then embarked on an incredible life of “good trouble”: as a Freedom Rider, as a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), as an organizer of the March on Washington, and as a leader of the famed march in Selma, Alabama, that became known as “Bloody Sunday.” By the time he was 25, Lewis had done more than most accomplish in a lifetime, using speech and assembly as the powerful tools for change the Founders intended them to be. And, of course, he was only getting started; Lewis continued to serve as a powerful voice for racial justice and First Amendment freedoms in the halls of Congress for over 30 years.

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Pope John Paul II (1920-2005, canonised 2013) went to see his would-be 1981 assassin and forgave him.

On 13 May 1981, in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City, Pope John Paul II was shot and wounded by Mehmet Ali Ağca - a 25-year-old Turkish Muslim - while he was entering the square. The Pope was struck twice and suffered severe blood loss. Ağca was apprehended immediately and later sentenced to life in prison by an Italian court.

On the 29th December 1983, Pope John Paul II and the gunman who gravely wounded him in 1981 sat in a prison cell for 20 minutes today, alone, in quiet conversation.

"What we said to each other is a secret between him and me," the Pope told reporters after the meeting. "I spoke to him as I would speak to a brother whom I have forgiven and who enjoys my confidence."

The visit to Ağca did not come as a surprise. It had been rumoured for at least two weeks that John Paul intended to see his attacker during a Christmas-season visit to the more than 2,000 inmates of Rebibbia, on the north-eastern outskirts of Rome.

A Vatican spokesman said that Mehmet Ali Ağca, knelt and kissed John Paul's ring as the Pope rose to leave. Prison guards and papal officials observed the meeting from a corridor outside the open cell, but the two men spoke with such low intensity that they could not be heard.

The Pope publicly forgave his assailant, who was pardoned by Italian president Carlo Azeglio Ciampi at the Pope's request - and then deported to Turkey in June 2000. Ağca converted to Roman Catholicism in 2007.

The Pope hoped the meeting would be an example to the world of the healing powers of forgiveness. But the act of forgiveness is extraordinarily complex. It becomes especially intricate when the spirit of forgiveness is urged as a basis for public policy.

A coda to this event. I have seen that the bullet taken out of Pope John Paul II's body is – pointing downwards - in the crown on the head of Our Lady of Fatima. The saintly Pope believed that it was Our Lady of Fatima that saved his life.

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Prophet Muhammad's (570-632) teaching on forgiveness

“Whoever suffers an injury and forgives (the person responsible), Allah will raise his status to a higher degree and remove one of his sins.” If we expect forgiveness from Almighty Allah then we also have the ability to forgive others.

Recent Popes on forgiveness

"Dearest Filomena, I am terrified at the thought of the cruelty that disfigured your face and your dignity as a woman and mother. I apologize to you and take upon myself the weight of a humanity that does not know how to beg forgiveness from (s)he who is offended, trampled and marginalized."

These words, expressed by Pope Francis to thank Filomena Lamberti for dedicating her book *Amore Criminale* (2018) to him, deeply moved this woman who was so atrociously disfigured when her violent husband threw sulphuric acid in her face.

"These are not words written at random, but in the first person by Pope Francis. It's a letter that I keep jealously, and which gives me the strength to continue," Lamberti explained, choked with emotion, on 25 November last during a religious programme on the channel Italian Rai 1.

Lay theologian Thierry Collaud, a lecturer in moral theology at the Catholic University of Fribourg in Switzerland, can well understand her emotion.

"Every victim needs to hear someone tell them a wrong has been committed," he stresses, recalling that in Filomena's case, this was all the more important since her husband showed no remorse.

"The fact that it's the pope, one of the symbolic figures of the human family, who has recognized the wrong done to this woman makes it even stronger," said Collaud.

This is not the first time Pope Francis has asked one or many people in suffering for forgiveness, in the name of humanity.

"I would like to say to the youth, in the name of all of us adults: forgive us if, often, we have not listened to you, if, instead of opening our hearts, we have filled your ears," he said on Oct. 28, 2018 at the closing Mass of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment.

This was a way of recalling that "in the Church, the sin of the faithful is assumed by the pope, just as in a company, the error of a subordinate is assumed by his hierarchical superior," said Dominican Philippe-Marie Margelidon.

That does not mean that adults no longer need to apologize for not listening to youth. On the contrary, they are being urged to do so even more.

However, said Collaud, "when Pope Francis asks for forgiveness on behalf of abuser priests, he always speaks in the plural – "we have let develop", "we've badly managed..."

This means, according to the Swiss theologian, that "the pope is not thinking so much as a hierarchical leader, but as a member of the Body of Christ. When a body allows this type of sin to develop within it, there is undeniably an issue of collective responsibility shared by all members of that body."

These words recall the idea of "structures of sin" espoused by St John-Paul II. They could well lead the pope to ask the presidents of the bishop's conferences, present this weekend at the Vatican for the summit on sexual abuse, to take part together in an act of penance

Why? Because while it is necessary and fair to denounce the ecclesial structures that allowed so much sexual abuse against minors, it is also necessary as a committed member of this structure to ask for forgiveness for these crimes.

"Because I am my brother's keeper, when my brother errs, I share the wrong he commits," explains Thierry Collaud, alluding to Cain's famous response after he killed his brother Abel. (*Gen.4:9*).

Pope Francis had taken over this Biblical response for his own account at a prayer for peace in the Vatican in 2013. "Am I my brother's keeper?" he asked. "Yes, you are your brother's keeper! Being a human person means being one another's keepers!"

"Just as Christ took the sin of the world upon himself, the Church needs to purify itself ceaselessly from the wrongs committed by its members and sometimes its highest representatives," said Father Margelidon.

This is why the Church proposes to do collective penance for its sinner members, whether clergy or lay, through a day of fasting, for example. Some bishops also make discreet gestures of penance for priests in their dioceses caught up in scandals.

The late Bishop François-Emile-Marie Cléret de Langavant, for example, bishop of Saint-Denis-de-La Réunion from 1934 to 1960, wore sack cloth daily for offences committed by members of his clergy.

Like his predecessors, Pope John Paul sometimes apologizes for the past misdeeds of the Church. He did it for example in Bolivia in 2015 for "the crimes perpetrated by the Church against indigenous peoples during what is erroneously termed the conquest of the Americas."

The gesture of the French bishops, in their declaration of repentance in Drancy in 1997, has also remained in people's minds.

As theologian Philippe-Marie Margelidon recalls, "because of the continuity of the Church, which is One in space, time and the communion of Saints, the Pope represents the Church of the present and the past. He can thus ask God to forgive a wrong committed in the past."

Since our humanity is in solidarity, and even complicit, with sin, the Pope can take that sin upon himself.

"He did it in an analogous manner," Thierry Collaud explained, recalling that 2,000 years ago, Christ "in a perfect manner," was in solidarity with humans in their fight against sin.

"The sacrifice of Jesus does not need to be redone, and the Pope does not see himself as a second Christ," he adds, but like the suffering servant who, by taking the violence upon himself, stops the violence (Isaiah 53), Christ asks each human being to act in the same way, at his level.

"Fighting against sin in the footsteps of Christ is to try and avoid sin through conversion," noted the Swiss theologian. "It's also, through the act of forgiveness, to give sinners and victims a way out."

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Saints Pope Cornelius and Bishop Cyprian are celebrated together on 16th September because of their close friendship and shared dedication to the early Christian Church during a time of intense persecution by the emperor Decius. Cornelius served as Pope from 251 to 253 CE. His papacy was characterised by his compassionate stance towards Christians who had lapsed under persecution and had apostatised. Apostasy refers to the act of renouncing one's Christian faith, often under the threat of death or severe punishment, by publicly denying belief in Christ or participating in pagan rituals. Pope Cornelius was advocating that people who did this should be forgiven and welcomed back into the Church, rather than being given harsh punishments. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, was a staunch supporter of Cornelius in this matter, and the two maintained a strong correspondence, with Cyprian defending Cornelius against schismatic movements that sought to undermine his authority.

Pope Cornelius and Bishop Cyprian remain profoundly relevant today because they championed forgiveness as a cornerstone of our Christian faith. In a world that is becoming increasingly unforgiving and, as a result, harsher and more difficult to navigate, their message is more important than ever. While calls for justice are often appropriate and necessary, we must never lose sight of the imperative to forgive, a principle that lies at the heart of our Christian faith.

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Mahatma Gandhi(1869-1948) "famously said" "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

He may have been boasting of his own strength. Who knows.

In my experience, he was wrong. I have come across quite a few 'weak folk' who apologized out of fear. "If in doubt, I grovel. It stops me getting hurt."

10. Apologising

For 1,900 years, churches didn't apologize for the bad things that they had done. However, after World War II, especially a declaration by Germany's Protestant churches that they had failed to adequately oppose the Nazis, attitudes seem to have changed.

In the 1990s, church apologies increased as more attention was paid to human rights following the Cold War.

Pope Francis travelled to Canada from July 24 to 29, 2022, where he visited Alberta, Quebec and Nunavut, to apologize for abuses Indigenous people suffered in the country's state-funded

residential Christian schools. From the 1800s to the 1970s, Native children were forced to attend the schools where abuse was rampant.

Francis flew from Rome to Edmonton, Alberta, where his welcoming party included Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mary May Simon, an Inuk who is Canada's first Indigenous governor general. Francis had no official events scheduled Sunday, giving him time to rest before his meeting Monday with survivors near the site of a former residential school in Maskwacis, where he is expected to deliver an apology.

Aboard the papal plane, Francis told reporters this was a "penitential voyage" and he urged prayers in particular for elderly people and grandparents.

Indigenous groups are seeking more than just words, though, as they press for access to church archives to learn the fate of children who never returned home from the residential schools. They also want justice for the abusers, financial reparations and the return of Indigenous artefacts held by the Vatican Museums.

"This apology validates our experiences and creates an opportunity for the church to repair relationships with Indigenous peoples across the world," said Grand Chief George Arcand Jr., of the Confederacy of Treaty Six. But he stressed: "It doesn't end here – there is a lot to be done. It is a beginning."

Francis' week-long trip culminated with a historic April 1 apology for the "deplorable" abuses committed by some Catholic missionaries in residential schools.

The Canadian government has admitted that physical and sexual abuse were rampant in the state-funded Christian schools that operated from the 19th century to the 1970s. Some 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to attend in an effort to isolate them from the influence of their homes, Native languages and cultures and assimilate them into Canada's Christian society.

Then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology over the residential schools in 2008. As part of a lawsuit settlement involving the government, churches and approximately 90,000 surviving students, Canada paid reparations that amounted to billions of dollars being transferred to Indigenous communities. Canada's Catholic Church says its dioceses and religious orders have provided more than \$50 million in cash and in-kind contributions, and hope to add \$30 million more over the next five years.

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 had called for a papal apology to be delivered on Canadian soil. However, it was only after the 2021 discovery of the possible remains of around 200 children at the former Kamloops residential school in British Columbia, that the Vatican mobilized to comply with the request.

"I honestly believe that if it wasn't for the discovery ... and all the spotlight that was placed on the Oblates or the Catholic Church as well, I don't think any of this would have happened," said Raymond Frogner, head archivist at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

Frogner had just returned from Rome where he had spent five days at the headquarters of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, which operated 48 of the 139 Christian-run residential schools, the most of any Catholic order. After the graves were discovered, the Oblates finally offered “complete transparency and accountability” and allowed him into its headquarters to research the names of alleged sex abusers from a single school in the western Canadian province of Saskatchewan.

While there, he found 1,000 black-and-white photos of schools and their students, with inscriptions on the back, that he said would be valuable to survivors and their families hoping to find traces of their loved ones. He said the Oblates agreed on a joint project to digitize the photographs and make them available online.

The Inuit community, for its part, is seeking Vatican assistance to extradite a single Oblate priest, the Rev. Joannes Rivoire, who ministered to Inuit communities until he left in the 1990s and returned to France. Canadian authorities issued an arrest warrant for him in 1998 on accusations of several counts of sexual abuse, but it has never been served.

Inuit leader Natan Obed personally asked Francis for the Vatican’s help in extraditing Rivoire, telling The Associated Press in March that it was one specific thing the Vatican could do to bring healing to his many victims.

Asked about the request, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said last week that he had no information on the case.

At a news conference Saturday in Edmonton, organizers said they will do all they can to enable school survivors to attend the papal events, particularly for the Maskwacis apology and the Tuesday gathering at Lac Ste. Anne, long a popular pilgrimage site for Indigenous Catholics.

Both are in rural areas, and organizers are arranging shuttle transport from various park-and-ride lots. They noted that many survivors are now elderly and frail and may need accessible vehicle transport, diabetic-friendly snacks and other services.

The Rev. Cristino Bouvette, national liturgical coordinator for the papal visit, who is partly of Indigenous heritage, said he hopes the visit is healing for those who “have borne a wound, a cross that they have suffered with, in some cases for generations.”

Bouvette, a priest in the Diocese of Calgary, said the papal liturgical events will have strong Indigenous representation - including prominent roles for Indigenous clergy and the use of Native languages, music and motifs on liturgical vestments.

Bouvette said he’s doing this work in honour of his “kokum,” the Cree word for grandmother, who spent 12 years at a residential school in Edmonton. She “could have probably never imagined those many years later that her grandson would be involved in this work.”

The apology follows a similar one Francis made in April in Rome to members of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities.

The setting matters, said Fernie Marty, a member of the Papaschase, a Cree nation in Alberta. The 73-year-old is a survivor of a day school — part of a system that, like residential schools, aimed to assimilate Indigenous children.

He appreciated the pope's Rome apology, but "this is where all the atrocities happened," Marty said. It's "more meaningful coming on Canadian soil."

Marty, an elder at Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, a Catholic parish in Alberta's capital oriented toward Indigenous people and culture, said the pope's visit offers "a tremendous opportunity for my own personal healing."

But George Pipestem, 79, a member of the Montana First Nation and a survivor of the Ermineskin Indian Residential School, questioned the relevance of a papal apology, just as he questioned apologies by Canadian prime ministers for the government's role in the schools. He said the abusers should be the ones apologizing: "They're all gone, though. This apologizing, it doesn't matter to me. It's like nothing. It's only a word."

It is not uncommon for a leader who was neither involved nor alive when a wrong was committed to deliver a church's apology. Some took generations to say sorry.

St. John Paul II made it clear that the present had a responsibility for the past - and left a legacy of papal apologies. None were more significant than his list of *mea culpas* issued as the Catholic Church opened its 2000 Jubilee and entered its third millennium.

John Paul apologized for Catholics' sins through the ages, including against women, Jews and other religious minorities. In his most memorable act, on 26th March 2000, he tucked a prayer note into the Western Wall in Jerusalem asking God's forgiveness for those who "have caused these children of yours to suffer."

The following year, when John Paul sent his first-ever email, it was an apology for colonial-era abuses of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and the Pacific, as well as for the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy.

His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, also apologized for clerical abuse, most significantly in a 2010 letter to Irish faithful. He said he was "truly sorry" for the hurt and blamed Irish bishops, though he was silent on Vatican responsibility.

Francis has gone further, first apologizing for his own errors in defending a Chilean bishop who covered up abuse by the country's most notorious paedophile priest. That 2018 scandal was a turning point in the pope's understanding of abuse, and he continued to apologize for it. Juan Carlos Cruz, who was abused by that priest, received both a church apology and a personal one from Francis. It felt like finally the church recognized the harm he suffered, and he could start healing, Cruz said. It also motivated Cruz, now a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, to continue advocating for survivors.

"Pope Francis had a sincerity that it was hard not to believe. And it's not because you're sitting in front of a pope. ... It's because of his humility and sincerity," Cruz said. "Trust me. I've received apologies from many people in the church that are as fake as you can imagine." Francis has also apologized, in 2015 in Bolivia, for wrongs committed by the church against Indigenous peoples during the conquest of the Americas.

Contrition and apologies, he hoped, would sow the seeds of forgiveness across an increasing area of the world.

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To have your apology accepted, try to

1. Express sincere regret

Telling someone you apologize isn't enough for a good apology. It's also important to let them know that you regret what you did.

Not only should you take responsibility for what happened, but you should let them know that you feel bad about how you made them feel.

Some things you can say to express remorse and regret in a sincere way include:

- "I wish I'd considered how this would make you feel before I acted."
- "I wish I could take back what I did."
- "I regret not having thought this through first."

2. Make amends

Part of apologizing is showing, not just telling. And to show you're sorry, amends are necessary.

Amends also help to at least partially repair the damage that was done. For example, offer to repair or replace an item if you actually physically damaged it.

If you instead made a person at work feel less valued, see what you can do to show them that you actually do value them. For instance, give them an opportunity to showcase their skills at work.

3. Make sure your apology is for the right reasons

Sometimes, you may apologize in a situation where both you and the other person have hurt feelings. But make sure you don't apologize just to get an apology in return.

4. Choose your timing correctly

Apologies are important. But like anything else, there's a time and place for them.

If you notice that the other person is still very upset and needs time to process, wait before you apologize.

5. Only apologize for your part in the conflict

An apology helps you take responsibility for what you (or your team) did. But over-apologizing isn't beneficial, either. The entire conflict may not be your fault.

Women especially should be on the lookout for this behaviour in themselves. According to research, women tend to apologize more than men.

Gradually, it has become normal for countries - and the Catholic Church - to apologize for their past; for example, violence, or slavery or extracting wealth from their previous colonies.

The British colonial regime looted nearly \$45 trillion from India from 1765 to 1938. The amount is 15 times the annual GDP of the UK today. Hence, it is estimated that between 2016 and 2021, around £2.3 billion in UK aid went to India.

6. Provide context without making excuses

When offering an explanation, aim to provide context rather than making excuses. Help the other person understand the circumstances that led to the situation without diminishing your accountability. For example, share the factors that contributed to your actions without using them as a way to avoid responsibility.

7. Admit your error

Acknowledge your mistake directly and without hesitation. Avoid downplaying or deflecting blame. By openly admitting your error, you demonstrate honesty and integrity. Acknowledging your mistake is a crucial step in the apology process, showing that you are aware of the impact of your actions.

8. Take ownership of your actions

Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions. Avoid shifting blame onto external factors or other people. Taking ownership of your actions reinforces your commitment to making amends and rebuilding trust. By acknowledging your role, you create a foundation for a sincere and meaningful apology.

9. Propose a solution where applicable

If possible, offer a solution to rectify the situation. This demonstrates your commitment to making amends and actively contributing to resolving the issue. Whether it's correcting a mistake, replacing a damaged item, or taking specific actions to address the consequences, proposing a solution adds substance to your apology.

10. Request forgiveness

Express a genuine desire for forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness demonstrates humility and a recognition of the other person's feelings. Be sincere in your request, understanding that forgiveness is a personal choice and may take time. Avoid pressuring the person to forgive immediately; instead, emphasize your commitment to earning back their trust.

11. Be authentic and genuine

Sincerity is key to a meaningful apology. Ensure that your words and actions align with genuine remorse. Avoid appearing insincere or apologetic for the sake of convenience. A sincere apology fosters trust and opens the door for genuine reconciliation.

12. Follow through on your commitments

After offering your apology, follow up with concrete actions to demonstrate your commitment to change. Whether it's implementing the proposed solution, making amends, or taking steps to prevent a recurrence, follow-through reinforces the sincerity of your apology.