

Repentance and Forgiveness

While an accurate understanding of forgiveness can be discerned by studying scripture, it does take all 66 books to plumb the depths of forgiveness. It is difficult to fully comprehend forgiveness because we constantly grow in our understanding and appreciation of God's wisdom. One question that relates to forgiving another has to do with the place of repentance as a requisite for granting that forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness types (suggested by Stephen Marmer, UCLA Medical School)
 - a. Exoneration: wiping the slate clean and restoring the relationship to a state of innocence
 - i. When the harmful action was an accident
 - ii. When the offender simply doesn't understand the hurt they were inflicting (especially hard because we assume that they must have known)
 - iii. When the offender repents, Acts 3:19; I John 1:9; Acts 8:22
 1. Luke 17:3-6 (be careful not to isolate verse 3)
 - a. In this scenario, how is genuineness or earnestness of repentance measured?
 - b. We may be inclined to put up hoops for the penitent to jump through or impose arbitrary measures to test their repentance
 - c. "Seven times in one day" is not conduct that validates contrition or repentance
 - d. Jesus mandated forgiveness and verse 3 indicates the object is the "forgiver", cf. Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:14-15
 - e. In verse 5 the apostles, in essence, said they needed more faith in order to do this
 - b. Forbearance when the relationship matters to you, and you want to maintain it
 - i. Partial apology
 - ii. Forgive but not forget
 - iii. Forbearance can become exoneration after the passage of time and good behavior
 - c. Release when there is no repentance or acknowledgement of hurt
 - i. Release does not demand that you continue the relationship, only that you do not define the relationship by the hurt caused
2. Jesus' on repentance and forgiveness
 - a. Jesus is the example for us, Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32
 - b. Clearly, God took the first step, sending Jesus in order to forgive my sin prior to my repentance – in fact while I was an enemy
 - c. My repentance (and baptism) completed the process of forgiveness