

WHY WE DON'T FORGIVE

ISSUE 03 | JUNE 2020



Forgiveness is simple, but not easy. Many folks claim they want to be free of the negative emotions which plague people who don't forgive. In the end, all of us love the idea of forgiveness, but we don't want to forgive.

Why?

Years ago, I was listening to a musician play the piano in my home, and I said, "I'd love to play the piano like you." Who hasn't dreamt of making music after hearing a musician play their instrument, to paint or draw like an artist? And who hasn't said to themselves or others, "I'd love to do that, but I don't have the _____ (time, money, talent...) to do so."

Okay, now back to the story. The musician whipped around and said, "No you don't. You only love *the idea* of playing the piano. If you really loved to play, you'd pay for lessons, you'd find time to practice, and you'd learn how to play the piano."

And of course he was right.

We all love the idea of forgiveness, until we have to actually forgive someone.

This is the third and last in my series on forgiveness, but it is the foundation of the whole forgiveness project. Think of booklet #1, **How to Forgive** as the framework of our life. With a strong, well built (healthy) framework, we'll enjoy years of pleasure from our structure. It'll protect us during crises, and storms which we will experience. Further, a healthy framework allows us to "add-on" or build on the structure. Think of the "add-ons" as fulfilling relationships, satisfaction in work, and a general contentment, purpose, or pleasure in life. Now every house, everybody, every organization, or machine needs maintenance. That's what booklet #2 is all about.

If booklet #1 is learning how to build well, then booklet #2, **How To Apologize** is the maintenance. You see, everything is relational. Read this again: **everything is relational**. And if this is true, then the most valuable skill sets we can develop are relational skill sets.

The most impactful thing in our life will be our relationships. Relationships always shape us and make us.



EVERYTHING IS RELATIONAL

Stop for a moment and think about this: **what has every significant positive or negative moment in our life involved?** The answer? **Another person.** And if you're a practitioner of a religious tradition, then you know practicing your faith always involves another person.

Talent and beauty will never be enough, and will replace healthy relational skills.

Now back to booklet #2,
How To Apologize.

This is the maintenance
of our healthy forgiving
structure. Even if we
know and apply the
three different types of
forgiveness, we still need
to maintain the structure
of our life with the three
different types of
apologies. So now, if we
know how to forgive,
if we know how to ask for
forgiveness, then why
don't we forgive?

We don't forgive
because we have to
"give up" one, two or
three unhealthy *rights*
which are:

- The right to get even*
- The right to be superior*
- The right to be a victim*



REASON #1

THE RIGHT TO GET EVEN



There is a sick pleasure in holding on to the right to get even. We will play scenarios in our mind where we win over our offender: we embarrass them, beat them or harm them in some way. It may seem like justice, but it is a twisted, deformed interpretation of the adage, *"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."* Keeping a grudge weakens our framework, and sooner or later, it will collapse. What does collapse look like? Tempers lost, relationships ended, loss of mental or emotional energy. It could manifest in several ways, but it is never good.

Holding on to our right to get even harms us, and those close to us, but rarely the offender.

REASON #2

THE RIGHT TO FEEL SUPERIOR

Ahhhhhhh, the delicious taste of moral superiority. The sick, sweet smell of conceit, hubris, and self-importance. Who would give that up? Who would willingly lay down the right to feel superior over their offender? **A healthy adult.** But often the feeling of superiority becomes a balm to soothe our wounds—real or imagined—as we endlessly replay the incident. The real curse of this right is like a weed it grows in the garden of our souls and takes over.

And soon, we rarely if ever think we're wrong about anything or anyone. It sounds like this: "I'm intuitive... I'm usually right about people (especially when they fail)... I just had a feeling they, (or, it) was not going to work out..." Also, the morally superior person will believe they know everyone's inner motivation even if they never met the person. Now they won't actually say this in their word or thoughts, but it leaks out. Further, they're not teachable, so they rarely listen to others. And finally, they especially love to be seen as a "good" person.

Holding on to our "right" to feel superior prevents us from recognizing our faults, changing our habits to grow into a healthy person.



REASON #3

THE RIGHT TO BE A VICTIM

If we're hit by a car and injured, it's not our fault. We're the victim. If we're robbed, violated in some way, again we're the victim, but a vital part of getting whole, is not **remaining** a victim. So why do we prefer to remain one? Because when we are a victim, we are not responsible, correct? So if something or someone **outside of us**, caused us harm, then we have an excuse for not doing the hard work of getting well, being well, and staying well. What does this right look like?



As a victim, when someone tries to talk to us about our behavior, we have the excuse, *"You don't understand.... You don't know what it's like to be-betrayed, suffer, lied to."* Our victim status becomes a shield of defense against incoming truth bombs. Second, we incorrectly think our victim status removes the responsibility of doing the hard work of getting healthy and becoming whole. It doesn't. Third, it allows us to illicit sympathy from others, and then luxuriating in the sick warm cesspool of self-pity.

Holding on to our "right" to be a victim stunts our growth, and keeps us an emotional infant.

WAS THIS HELPFUL?



WHY WE DON'T FORGIVE IS THIRD IN A THREE PART SERIES. ALSO IN THIS SERIES ARE, *HOW TO FORGIVE*, AND *HOW TO APOLOGIZE*.

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