

WHY IS IT HARD TO FORGIVE?

Joe Slater

When it comes to forgiveness, striking a Biblical balance can be difficult. God doesn't automatically forgive everyone of all sin, nor does He expect us to do so. However, He does forgive and accept those who turn from their evil ways, and His word teaches us to do the same.

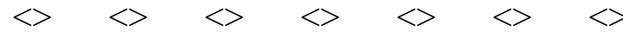
For example, the church at Corinth withdrew from a brother who was living in incest. Their action produced a good result as the immoral man repented. However, the Corinthians evidently hesitated to forgive him. Paul told them to *"forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow"* (2 Corinthians 2:7, 8).

Why do we sometimes hesitate to forgive? One of our hang-ups might be the magnitude of the sin. While there are no insignificant sins, some are more extreme than others. We may be willing to forgive common, everyday sins, but skeptical about forgiving someone who strayed far afield. "Why, look at what he did! He confessed and isn't doing that any more, but how can I forgive him for such an awful deed?" Such an attitude mirrors the disposition of the older brother in Jesus' parable of the lost son (Luke 15). Let us strive, instead, to be like the father who welcomed his repentant son home.

A second stumbling block may be our fear that the offender might repeat the transgression. "How do I know he won't do it again?" In short, you don't! But be honest – have you ever asked God to forgive you, yet later you repeated the sin? I'm not defending recurring sin; I'm simply saying that the possibility of a person reverting to sin must not stand in the way of our forgiving that person. If he returns to iniquity, then deal with that situation as the Scriptures teach.

Repentant sinners need love and acceptance, not skepticism and hostility. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to forgive the remorseful brother *"lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Refusing to forgive a contrite person might discourage that individual to the point of despair, prompting him to abandon all faith in Christ. Such is exactly what Satan desires. Let us take the utmost care lest, while we think we are upholding virtue, we actually let Satan use us to deter a soul from being saved.



Button That Pocket, Soldier!

A retired military officer reminisced about an inspection he had conducted. He approached an E-2 (private), freshly arrived from basic training. He stopped face-to-face in front of the young man whose pulse could be seen throbbing in his throat.

The first thing that caught this officer's eye was an unbuttoned pocket on the shirt of the young enlisted man's uniform. The officer barked out in his best command voice, "Button that pocket, soldier!"

The young soldier turned three shades of red, looked left and right, and sheepishly asked, "Right now, sir?" The officer said, "Of course, right now! When did you think I meant for you to do it?"

The private handed the officer his weapon and, with both hands trembling, reached out and buttoned the flap on the officer's shirt pocket.

Why are we so quick to see a speck in a brother's eye, but not a plank in our own eye?

--Neil Richey ([Balance Again](#)) adapted, via *Preacher Talk*

Are You A Fraud?

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

In 2009, Sir Terry Pratchett wrote, "I wish I was a real author. I feel like a fraud." When he wrote this, he had sold over 45 million copies of his books. Queen Elizabeth had knighted him for his literary contributions to England. Today, he has sold over 85 million books.

So many Christians walk around feeling like a fraud. The religious counterpart would be "I feel like a hypocrite." Why would a Christian think or say that? Perhaps he has a bad habit he feels he cannot overcome. Maybe he has committed a sin and cannot forgive himself. Or it could be he doesn't feel like he is doing enough for God.

Hasn't he read Romans 8:1? *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."* A Christian who feels like a hypocrite should know that God doesn't expect us to do enough. That's why Jesus came to save us. Only God's Son could do enough by giving Himself as a ransom. When we become Christians, God doesn't expect perfection. John tells us, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9). God is always there, willing to forgive us and help us overcome.

All Christians experience spiritual highs and lows. When we are feeling unspiritual, it is easy to let our emotions dictate our thinking. The way to overcome that low feeling is to read about God's unwavering love for us in the last part of Romans Chapter Eight. God would never call us a fraud. He loves us too much.

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)