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FORGIVE and move FORWARD

By Janet Clements

Legend Has It That Leonardo Da Vinci Was Once Painting A Fresco When One Of His Apprentices Annoyed Him With Some Sort Of Careless Remark. As I Heard The Story, The Master Artist Was Enraged At The Man, Who Ran Off.

But when Leonardo returned to his work—at the time he was painting the face of Jesus sitting at the table with his disciples at the last supper—he couldn't get it right. At last, he put down his paints and brushes to seek out the man whom he had scolded. When he finally found him, he asked for forgiveness. After Leonardo made his amends, he returned to the studio. His genius now restored, he went on to render the face of Jesus flawlessly, in a painting of such beauty that it is famous to this day.

I wonder if the life of Jesus is what impelled Leonardo to seek forgiveness. It's a life that teaches poignant lessons. Jesus faced injustice, hatred, and humiliation—and yet he openly asked God to forgive those who had hurt him.

How could he do that? I believe Jesus could forgive because he knew that no matter what form an offense takes, it has none of the power that a good God gives. Jesus defined evil, i.e., all that harms or limits us, as "a liar, and the father of it" ([John 8:44](#)). A

lie couldn't have the power of truth. Evil actually dissipates in the presence of forgiveness and ceases to have a means to continue to operate.

Jesus showed humanity the powerlessness of human wrong in the face of God's powerful love. And he communicated the beauty of this understanding by forgiving his offenders.

Maybe Jesus was able to forgive so totally because he saw the original innocence and goodness of everyone, even his enemies. Mary Baker Eddy wrote about this idea in *Science and Health*: "Jesus beheld in Science the perfect man, who appeared to him where sinning mortal man appears to mortals. In this perfect man the Saviour saw God's own likeness, and this correct view of man healed the sick. Thus Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is intact, universal, and that man is pure and holy" ([pp. 476-477](#)).

According to the Bible, Jesus' enemies never got him to hate them, only to forgive them. And the grace of forgiveness opened the way for final victory over all that threatened him.

Forgiving as Jesus forgave still brings the power to heal bruised or broken relationships in this day and age, and to experience healing as well. Once when my daughter was six years old, she was intentionally injured on the side of her face. One of her friends hit her hard with a compass, as the result of a misunderstanding. She ran to me.

I saw the deep cut and reached out and held her tenderly for quite a while, wiping away the tears and gently caring for her. When I was a child, I had been quickly healed of a similar wound through prayer, so it was natural for me not to panic at this moment, but to pray instead. As I washed her face, I told her that God's love "got there first," and this loving power left no room for any hurt to touch her.

When the tears stopped and she was calm, I told her that right away we were both going to pray to forgive her friend. I explained that the minute you start praying for someone who has mistreated you, that person is no longer an enemy, but a friend, because you can't pray for someone and hate at the same time. We began by remembering the good things her friend had done.

Soon, the doorbell rang, and there was my daughter's friend standing there, apologizing and humbly asking for forgiveness. My daughter and I gladly forgave her, and we all had a big three-way hug. I felt we were tied together in love through God's ribbon of grace. And I really believe we each felt the divine peace and love in our hearts that forgiveness brings. Smiles shone through tears of gratitude as my daughter's friend waved goodbye and turned to go back home.

The deep wound healed quickly leaving no scar, and our daughter had no lingering pain or discomfort. The prayer of forgiveness had effectively erased the thought of her being a victim, and therefore the incident left no mark of injury. Like a healing balm applied to a deep hurt, forgiveness brought restoration to my daughter and redemption to her friend. Even today, years later, the golden ribbon that hugged the three of us then, still holds us together as friends.

Forgiveness, whether you're asking for it or are expressing it to someone else, promotes reconciliation. It's like removing a roadblock so you can freely enjoy life's normal state: goodness.

Forgiveness can address small incidents or an almost inconsolable wrong. But how can you find the capacity to forgive? When you've been wronged or hurt, what diffuses the anger of injustice, overcomes the self-righteousness of thinking you deserved better,

removes the disappointment over shortcomings of another's character? And if I'm the one in the wrong, how do I get beyond the pride that prevents me from seeing my own mistake?

I've found that asking God for humility is one way to find the grace either to forgive or to seek forgiveness. Expressing humility is like cleaning a window so that the sun can shine through more brilliantly. Humility lets an all-pervading love flow into human relationships.

I've come to realize that God is the source of all forgiveness. Every expression of genuine affection, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness originates in God, because God is Love. And God has given everyone the ability to forgive. In today's world there are so many situations that ask for more of our forgiveness.

One meaning of *forgive* is "to give up." What do you and I give up when we forgive?

- We give up the thought that a hurt can have power to hold on to our life.
- We give up the enslavement to anguish, through our right to see others as Jesus did and to see wrongdoing as powerless.
- We give up ingrained ways of thinking about a painful situation. This mental change sets us free to move forward and feel loved.

Forgiveness brings the sweet realization that nothing can separate any of us from God.

About the author

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