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Forgiveness heals

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We have probably all had the opportunity to forgive another who has mistreated us in some way. In one such situation, our house was located on a corner, and the teenagers in our community decided that the side of our yard between the sidewalk and the street would be the depository for their glass pop bottles and more. We were always cleaning them up.

One spring day our little boy was barefoot and scooted over the sidewalk into this area before we could stop him. He got a deep cut in the bottom of his foot from one of those broken glass bottles. I took care of the wound and gently comforted him.

As I sat down to pray about this, I realized that what really needed healing was my attitude toward these teenagers. Labels, such as irresponsible, thoughtless, careless, selfish, were crowding my thought about them. Of course, those thoughts would not help at all in following Christ Jesus' clear command to love my neighbor as myself.

So I asked myself what really defines one's individuality? The answer that came to me was God, Soul—another name for God. Soul is the source and artist of all individuality in the universe. In that artistry, Soul has combined all the beautiful qualities of God to make each individual unique in glorifying God. It is a holy individuality, not a

personality that can do things outside the realm of Soul's design. The Apostle Paul invited us to turn from viewing one another as fleshly mortals when he said, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh" ([II Corinthians 5:16](#)).

In my prayer I began to lift off the fleshly descriptions of the teenagers and really cherish their true, Soul-defined nature as unselfish, wise, loving, responsible, and gracious. I spent some time in really rejoicing in the individuality of these dear teens. I cherished their true nature as children of God, actually incapable of doing wrong, until I got a sweet sense of peace and love about them.

The next day was church, and after Sunday School, our little one wanted to run around barefoot in the yard. It was another beautiful, sunny, spring day. So, I thought he could run around in the yard with his socks on. As I took off one of his shoes and his sock, the Band-Aid just fell off, and I looked at the bottom of his foot. The deep cut that had been there less than 24 hours before was totally gone. No sign of it was there. The foot was smooth, just as if nothing had happened. I was truly in awe of the healing power of forgiveness! I had glimpsed the spiritual reality that defines each of us as perfect, whole, innocent, and free. And never again did the teenagers put their empty bottles in our yard.

The healing came from yielding to the activity of the Christ, the love of God, which restored in my thought the eternal unity that Soul has designed into all its creation. And the mending of the flesh was a natural result. Like a tapestry, Soul has woven together the glorious spiritual universe, outlining with grace and loveliness every individuality in one harmonious, infinite whole. Doesn't true forgiveness on our part, then, include beholding—even despite material evidence to the contrary—man's divinely bestowed individuality, holy and good? Not excusing wrongdoing, but holding to the true nature of each of us and prayerfully affirming the impotence of evil?

We know the familiar words of forgiveness Christ Jesus expressed regarding those who had put him on the cross. He said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” ([Luke 23:34](#)). Isn’t it interesting that Jesus said, “*Father*, forgive them”? He didn’t say, “I forgive them.” In the depths of that experience he was turning to his Father, God, appealing to God’s ever-available forgiveness. Jesus said, “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” ([John 8:28](#)). So, forgiveness, then, has as its source— and is reflective of—the divine, and is not a personal ability.

One of the origins of the word *for* is *before* (see *Oxford Living Dictionaries*), and one of the meanings of the word *give* is “to bestow.” This has helped me think of forgiving as being aware of what was “before bestowed” by God. Hasn’t everyone’s divine nature been “before bestowed” on them, or originally bestowed on each child of God, Soul?

This divine bestowal is clearly shown in the first chapter of Genesis when God saw everything that He had made, and it was very good (see [verse 31](#)). Examining the Hebrew word for *good* as used in the Old Testament, we find its meaning includes beautiful, bountiful, gracious, joyful, kindly, and loving. So we could reason that forgiveness is yielding to Soul—to seeing that the Father-Mother of all has forever bestowed on everyone their true, holy nature, which cannot even behold evil.

Jesus’ statement reveals this higher sense of forgiveness in that Jesus was beholding the perfect man right there, even as he was on the cross. Mary Baker Eddy writes: “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” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, [pp. 476–477](#)). That perfect man, with a God-bestowed nature, can’t be malicious, revengeful, or hateful. The real man could know, be, and do only good.

In a world that can appear to be filled with injustice, violence, war, cutting political rhetoric, disrespect, and bullying, there is plenty of opportunity for forgiveness. It is not that these discords are to be considered real and powerful, or tolerated, but that the true nature of all should be embraced, thus opening the way for it to be manifested.

Christ Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness when he responded to one of his disciples that he was not to forgive just seven times, but seventy times seven. Jesus followed that with a parable about the kingdom of heaven; the parable concludes that from our hearts we should forgive others' trespasses, or offences and faults (see [Matthew 18:21–35](#)).

When Jesus forgave a woman accused of committing adultery (see [John 8:1–11](#)), he clearly saw her divine, sinless nature bestowed of God. Then he said to her, “Go, and sin no more.” He was instructing her to likewise cherish her divinely bestowed nature, and the forgiveness included expectation of her ceasing wrongdoing, thus the destruction of the sin.

We really can never come up short in forgiveness as we see that it is not a personal sense of forgiveness, but the Christ moving our thought to humbly yield to acknowledging what God has before bestowed on each of His children—a divine nature, loving and good. Paul wrote, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place” ([II Corinthians 2:14](#)). Forgiveness brought the fruits of healing to an innocent, little barefoot boy and to a neighborhood, and can even begin to bring them to a nation, to the world, even in “every place.” And isn't that how we move toward dwelling together in loving unity and peace?

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