



THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY
FORGIVENESS IN COMMUNITY | MARCH 29, 2026

WHEN FORGIVENESS SEEMS TO FAIL

If our goal is to “live in harmony with one another” (Romans 12:16), then the failure of forgiveness to secure legitimate peace and harmony is a real _____. After all, the peace Paul exhorts us toward is rich and vibrant, not the icy “peace” that too often characterizes relationships at church.

This problem is especially prevalent at church because church is one of the few places where relationships are close enough to cause real hurt, yet the community is large enough that you’re tempted to “deal with” strained relationships simply by _____ them.

Far too often, the reason forgiveness fails to secure relational _____ is not because reconciliation is impossible but because the “forgiveness” being offered is not full forgiveness.

WHAT FORGIVENESS INVOLVES

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.” -Luke 6:27-29

1. Commitment 1: Forgiveness Does Not _____

Whether through attack or slander or silence, punishment is wrong because it seizes a tool that is not _____ to wield (Romans 12:17).

Forgiveness cannot be cavalier about justice. It’s only because of God’s commitment to justice that we can love our enemies (Luke 6:35) and forgive them (Luke 6:37). If you are to escape the desire to punish, you must deliberately entrust yourself to the ____ who will avenge all wrong.

Forgiveness does not say, “This sin need not be punished.” Rather, forgiveness says, “Because God punishes, it’s not my place to punish.” This means that forgiveness is either looking back to the past justice or _____ to the future justice.

When we forgive someone who, as a Christian, has been forgiven by God, we are looking back to the justice God secured at the _____. When we forgive someone who is not in Christ, forgiveness looks ahead to the justice that God will one day secure.

The False Promise of Anger — Anger *can* be wonderfully beneficial, supplying courage to fight for what’s right. But for fallen creatures, anger frequently motivates a wrong desire to _____ (James 1:19-20).

2. Commitment 2: Forgiveness Does Not _____

When we pretend that no wrong was done, our attempts at “forgiveness” often buckle under the weight of the continued injustice we feel. If a church is to reflect the unity and beauty of God’s perfect character, we cannot settle for the false forgiveness of _____.

Only when we look justice square in the face and _____ it to God can we fully and deliberately embrace all the glorious *injustice* of forgiveness.

_____ is the corrosive residue that remains when we feel that justice was denied. To escape bitterness, forgiveness must cling to God’s promise of justice.

You must entrust to God not only the judicial consequences of sin but its circumstantial and relational consequences as well. That is, you must believe that *every* hardship — even every sin against you — is part of God’s _____ to do you good (Hebrews 12:10-11).

3. Commitment 3: Forgiveness _____ the Cost

Real forgiveness lays down its rights and says, “I will come alongside you to _____ what’s been broken as if it were my fault.”

In Jesus’ parable in Matthew 18:21-35, it’s the _____ who pays the debt. Similarly today, the offended one pays the debt. You leave your position facing off against the offender and walk around to his side.

“When you cancel a debt, it does not simply disappear. Instead, you _____ a liability that someone else deserves to pay. Similarly, forgiveness requires that you absorb certain effects of another person’s sins and you release that person from liability to punishment. This is precisely what Christ accomplished on Calvary” (Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*).

What does it look like for forgiveness to bear the cost of the offense? Sometimes — especially for smaller offenses, this means overlooking the offense (Proverbs 19:11). When an offense does not pose an ongoing danger to you or to the offender, and it is small enough that you can overlook it without danger to the relationship, it is your “glory” to _____ an offense.

However, for offenses that are more significant, absorbing the consequences of the offense will often be more _____. For example, an offense destroys trust, which must be rebuilt. Yet forgiveness does not stand back, waiting for the offender to earn trust back. Instead, as Paul says in Romans 12:20, it leans forward in love.

The only way that we can forgive like this is because _____ has already forgiven us (Colossians 3:13). The reality of God’s wrath removes vengeance from your hands. The reality that God’s wrath fell on Christ rather than on you replaces it with the obligation to love.

Forgiveness is a significant way in which our relationships at church reflect the glory of God. When we entrust justice to God, we overcome evil with _____ (Romans 12:21).