

Clothed with Compassion

Forgiven to Forgive

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” – Colossians 3:13

In Colossians, Paul is writing his letter to the church and instructs the Christians to make allowance for each other's faults. He expresses this same command in Ephesians 4:1-2, *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”* Considering Paul wrote this sentiment to two separate churches, it seems to me that even for early Christians, it was tough to get along. And it must be important if he wrote it twice! This longtime human struggle continues to be something I wrestle with today.

Recently, I was part of a discussion in our CVM Support Staff Bible study. We were talking about Christian community and how it is a fundamental part of our Christian walk. Then the conversation took a turn as we discussed how Christians in our community sometimes do not behave like Christians. Specifically, when we experience deceit, exclusion, selfishness, or just plain rudeness. Within 24 hours of the discussion, a fellow Christian was inconsiderate of me. I became angry and my feelings were hurt. Forgiveness was the furthest thing from my mind; I was immersed in my reaction instead.

It is most difficult for me to forgive when the person does not (or will not) apologize. Why should I forgive someone that isn't sorry? 1 Peter 4:7-8 says, *“Be clear minded and self-controlled so you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, as love covers over a multitude of sins.”* What I hear when I read that verse is, *“Take a breath, settle down, and pray. Love deeply and allow your love to cover over the mistakes of others.”* Holding a grudge is not living out love for my brother or sister.

What holds me back from offering forgiveness? Pride. And as I have learned over time, pride is a deadly sin that alienates us from God. To move into forgiveness means I no longer put myself or my feelings as the center of my focus; I choose to follow Jesus instead. Expecting perfect behavior from fellow believers (and myself) is unrealistic, as we are all human and fall short. In Matthew 18:21-22 Peter asks Jesus, *“Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”* Jesus said to him, *“I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”* When I think about the undeserved mercy that Christ lavishes on me on a repeated basis, I am disappointed in my lack of grace for others.

As Christians, we cannot escape quarreling with one another. When we know we have hurt someone, we must apologize. And when we have been hurt, we must offer forgiveness. We have to turn our humanity into humility and pray. We have received in this an Advocate that will help us through conflict into reconciliation – call on Him. Jesus commands it.

- 1. Think of a time when a fellow believer upset you. What did you do to work into forgiveness?**

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2. Think about a time that you caused hurt to a fellow believer and apologized. How was it received?
3. In what ways does the sin of pride affect your walk with Jesus?
4. As Christians, how can we hold each other accountable to apology/forgiveness?



*Nancy Krutzsch's involvement with CVM began with a short-term mission trip to Haiti. It was there she felt God's call to serve through the veterinary profession. As a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager and sales rep, Nancy had ongoing opportunities for relationships and mission trips through CVM. When the right set of circumstances aligned, she jumped into the Region Rep position while also assisting her husband with their farm. Nancy's husband and three grown children stand behind her passion for missions and veterinary medicine. Nancy serves as CVM's South Central Region Rep covering 8 states and 7 universities.
Email: nkrutzsch@cvm.org*