



Week 2.

- Do we have a duty to always forgive others who have hurt us?
- Read Matthew 18: 21-35
- What is the context in which Jesus tells this parable?

This parable illustrates the line in the Lord's Prayer that we need to be forgiving if we expect to receive divine forgiveness.'

- Can human forgiveness ever be equal to God's forgiveness?
- Do you agree with Tom Wright's statement opposite?

We are to cultivate a 'distinctive set of attitudes' and the orientation necessary to participate in the kingdom of God ie. love of God, love of self, love of neighbours & love of enemies' (p. 59/60)

- Do you agree with Cherry, that forgiveness is a disposition of the heart?
- Read the quote **highlighted** opposite. How might this help if we are challenged by events where forgiveness might appear impossible?
- How might we engage with forgiving someone who has deeply wounded us?
- Gordon Wilson's attitude made a huge impact on the Northern Ireland situation (see opp.). It was constructive & long lasting. How might it help us frame our responses when we are deeply injured?
- Do you agree that forgiveness may take many years, much prayer & heart searching? Is this something that resonates with you?
- Close in prayer, using the Lord's Prayer again.

Our Duty to Forgive?

'He who cannot forgive breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass'

George Herbert in 'With the Word' : Wiersbe : NavPress : 1991 : p.645

'Forgiveness of injuries is demanded of the Christian because of the nature of [Jesus]' (Williams p.56)

'Jesus does not want us to confuse who we are with who God is.' (p.57)

Tom Wright on Matt. 18 : 'the faculty we have for receiving forgiveness & for granting forgiveness are one and the same., if we [are] open [to] one, we shall [be] open [to] the other. If we slam the door on one, we slam the door on the other.' (p.58)

Any duty regarding forgiveness is best understood not as a requirement to forgive come what may, so much as the challenge to engage with whatever life throws at us with a forgiving heart & allow ourselves to be drawn into the spiritual struggle & healing agony which is honest about hurt & hopeful about overcoming the emotional & spiritual damage inflicted by others.' (p.74)

When we manage to salvage, discover, liberate or connect with the sacred, forgiveness can be liberated & forgiving can begin to happen (p.108)

Creativity, hope & generous empathy are hallmarks of the forgiving heart. (p.114)

Cherry quotes the experience of Gordon Wilson, whose daughter Marie was killed by an IRA bomb at the height of the NI Troubles. Wilson did not say 'I forgive them' but he did say 'I bear no ill will, I carry no grudge' (p. 100)

Resource : Film : Amish Grace : a film about the response of an Amish community to a shooting atrocity in a Pennsylvania School Room.

[Unless otherwise stated all quotes are from : Stephen Cherry : Healing Agony - Re-Imagining Forgiveness : Continuum : 2012]

