

- I. Forgiveness is so hard!
 - A. Whether a small unkind action or word on something serious like child abuse, harm done by others sinks in deeply and we suffer
 - B. Part of the reason harm hurts so much is that it introduces hell into our lives, often hellish spirits we are not equipped to deal with.
 - C. When our armour up, can deal with the hell, but when we are blindsided or vulnerable it's hard
 - D. This is why we are so offended by child abuse
 1. That child is not only hurt, but more significantly, introduced to a hell that they have no capacity at all to cope with
- II. What happens?
 - A. We feel rage, revenge, pain, depression, black moods, acting out in ways we thought we'd never do, etc
 - B. Perhaps most painful is that we all too often do the exact thing that was done to us
 1. Survivors of sexual abuse are more likely to be sexually promiscuous
 2. Children subjected to domestic violence are more likely to deal with conflict violently
 3. Why? Those hells were let in, and their presence causes actions we may not be able to control
- III. And we know we are supposed to forgive, and that it's important that we forgive
 - A. We prayed today, "Forgive us our debts as (or to the extent that) we forgive our debtors"
 1. We can receive the Lord's forgiveness to extent that a forgiving spirit is in us
- IV. What is forgiveness? Assuming for now we are forgiving real harm
 - A. Webster's Dictionary says forgiveness is "to cease to feel resentment against an offender"
 - B. New Church teaching says, "That to which no attention is paid is said to be forgiven." (*Heavenly Secrets* # 10504)
 1. Put away, send away
 - C. It is easiest to define it by its opposite, which is interesting.
 1. *Not* feeling revenge and anger
 2. *Not* paying attention to or dwelling on the issue any more
- V. Let's explore a couple of things forgiveness is not, because false kinds of forgiveness can cause a lot of pain
 - A. Forgiveness is not pretending it never happened or not judging anything
 1. We are told in the Word to "judge righteous judgment"
 2. If someone cheats you or lies to you, you are supposed to say it happened & that it is wrong
 3. There is a big difference between judging (saying it did happen and it was bad), and condemning (saying the person is evil for doing this)
 - B. 2: We may forgive while not forgetting
 1. Obviously, you don't send your child over to the house of someone who was abusive

2. You don't readily trust a liar or give money to a thief
 3. What you do is look at their subsequent life. The Lord said: Go and sin no more." The question is has this person changed? If they have, then you might consider forgetting, but until then you need to keep their weakness in mind
 4. Related to this: Every evil brings its own punishment. There is a universal justice
 - a. One way to think of forgiveness is to say, "You did this terrible thing. If in your heart you actually meant it and it was not a mistake, then you are bringing terrible pain into your life. I feel compassion and sadness that you have so much pain."
- C. 3: There's a big difference between unforgiveness and grief!
1. We may feel sadness for pain others have caused us and for the consequences in our lives
 - a. This is not unforgiveness, but genuine, healthy grief
 2. Unforgiveness is hatred and wanting them to suffer
- VI. Here is another definition of forgiveness the Lord gives: "To forgive is not to regard any one from [the point of view of] evil but from [the point of view of] good" (AC 7697)
1. Look for the good, notice the good, look from good
 2. And if you see evil try to correct it
 3. So don't be blind to harm, but look with eyes of love and charity
- VII. What is the danger in not forgiving?
- A. The danger is that unforgiveness is tied to revenge; you want the other person to *pay*, and the underlying emotion there is hate
 - B. It is looking at someone else from the point of view of evil
 1. Think about how you beat others up in your mind when angry
 - C. The danger, then, is that unforgiving feelings, anger, & resentment cause hellish emotions in us that hurts us more than what anyone else can do to us
 1. The saying goes that unforgiveness is "Drinking poison and hoping it will kill the other person"
 - D. We need to acknowledge the pain of betrayal & hurt, but in a healthy way
 - E. Does it seem absurd to think of forgiveness as shunning the evil of hatred or revenge? Is a part of you saying, "Wait a minute, look how **they** hurt **me**"?
 1. Misdirection is one of main tactics of the hellish influences in our life
 - F. What if they never say sorry? What if they never see it?
 1. Well that will be really sad for them and for you. It would be nice if they owned up and helped you to heal
 2. But let's be clear: Their saying sorry is not why you forgive. It helps, no doubt, but forgiveness is something inside
 - G. Here's a perspective leading to forgiveness that is not nice
 1. Think now of all the bad things you've done over your life. Every unkind word, every selfish behaviour, every untrue statement
 - a. It's a pretty big list, isn't it?
 - b. Forgiveness comes, in part, when we see that we are more like

that person who hurt us than we are like the Lord

- c. We need be hear Him say, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

VIII. In practical terms, what are some things we can do when trying to forgive?

- A. The main step is to acknowledge the harm done. Say it is wrong, unfair, horrible, or whatever. Do not feel guilty for having been hurt!
 - 1. Then you take personal responsibility for your response.
 - 2. It is saying, "I refuse to do the double damage of letting hell into my heart because of what you did. I will not drink the poison to spite you."
 - 3. Then turn to the Lord and ask Him help in letting it go

IX. Forgiveness may be the hardest of all things to do

- A. It is where we say once and for all, I am responsible for my feelings, and for my spiritual welfare
- B. It is right to feel anger & a desire to protect. It is also right to seek restitution.
- C. But it is more important to say: "You may have done terrible things to me, but I will not allow hell to be in me because of that."

X. The Lord forgives you right away. He never holds anything against you. But in order to receive His forgiveness He needs you to give it out

- A. Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, that My yoke is easy and My burden light.