

The First Presbyterian Church

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PRESBYTERIAN POST



JUNE 2019

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

~ 2 Corinthians 4:6-9 ~

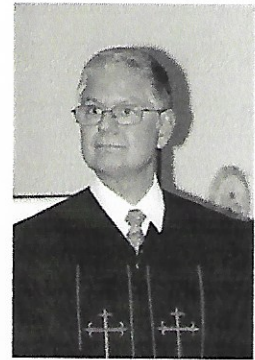
From the Desk of the Pastor



Taking A Healthy and

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

~ Ephesians 4:31-32 ~



Biblical Look

At Forgiveness

[Author's note- The topic of forgiveness can be very troubling for Christ-followers. Believers often suffer from incorrect expectations about how they should feel and what they should do in the wake of a deep hurt. These incorrect expectations cause us to pursue what is not ours to pursue and leave us feeling frustrated and diminished when we fail to achieve them. This lengthy article is intended to help the reader recast their thinking on forgiveness in light of biblical data. It is intended to help the reader live victoriously, confidently, and joyously, as God desires.]

When reading the Bible, it is easy to come away with the understanding that God is big on forgiveness. God is big on forgiveness with respect to forgiving our trespasses against him, and God is big on us forgiving the trespasses we have against each other. God the Father sent his Only Begotten Son to the cross in order to forgive our sins. So, from God's perspective, forgiveness isn't just big in theory; it is big in practice. And, we need not look any further than the Lord's Prayer (*a.k.a.* the Our Father) to confirm that Jesus wants his followers to live out Kingdom values concerning forgiveness and to reflect on this at least daily. In fact, we should consider the necessity of seeking forgiveness and forgiving one another as frequently as we eat.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
~ Matthew 6:12 ~

But what is forgiveness? How do we give it? How do we get it? These are really important questions. Our spiritual, emotional, and social well-being hang in the balance. Having wrong ideas about forgiveness can confuse and frustrate us. Even worse, they can harm us and others. Unfortunately, the world around us has a loud voice on the topic of forgiveness, but that loud voice is not grounded in biblical truth and so serves only to misdirect and confuse us. Gratefully, God did not leave us on our own to figure it out; God's Word helps us make sense about what Believers should endeavor to achieve and how to go about trying to achieve forgiveness.

"It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so." ~ Will Rogers ~

Virtually all truth about whom we are and how we are to behave is grounded in two things: 1) our being made in the image of God (**Genesis 1:27**) and 2) Believers are being transformed into the image of Christ (**2 Corinthians 3:18**). Our truest identity is that we are image bearers of the Most High God. For Believers in Jesus Christ, this goes even beyond the image bearing capacity of the pre-fallen Adam and Eve, because through the in-dwelling Holy Spirit, Christ abides in us and we in him.

Therefore, when we explore topics like forgiveness, it is useful to explore not only God’s instructions to us but also to look at what God has revealed about himself.

The context of forgiveness often involves deep hurts and heart wrenching betrayal. Powerful, body-chemistry-changing emotions like shame, fear, shock and rage often come into play. Compounding this, the hurts often tear off an old “scab” of improperly healed hurts. We sometimes have emotional responses that seem, even to us, disproportionate to the offense. No doubt that when this occurs it is because the offense at hand is added to all the past offenses that have not been properly dealt with. When this happens, we may say that the offense at hand “triggered” our disproportionate response. All the old hurts come to the surface. We are sometimes surprised and disappointed with ourselves. In our minds we may be saying, “I thought I was over that.” It makes us feel wretched about ourselves. Our disproportionate responses damage our relationships. The past spoils the present. Because faking forgiveness does not achieve what real forgiveness does, we must deal with forgiveness in an honest manner, yielding to God’s truth.

Honesty with ourselves can sometimes be painful. What if our honest feeling is “hate?” What if we actually hate someone and wish them harm? Do we immediately tell ourselves that we are bad people? Do we silently yell at ourselves to just get over our feelings? Maybe we are successful for a while at choking down our feelings. We tell ourselves that the past is in the past. Then one day, something comes up and all those vicious thoughts come flooding forward. Slanderous thoughts fill our mind and maybe even come out of our mouth. We are ashamed. We are discouraged and demoralized. We suddenly realize that we failed in forgiveness. Once again, we feel a torrent of terrible emotions as if the past offence had just happened. Failing to be honest in the process of forgiveness is a sure-fire way to suffer disappointing setbacks. By way of analogy, holistic healers have long advocated the use of comfrey poultices to heal wounds. But here is what holistic healers also say, when the wound is deep, the comfrey poultice must not be used too soon, lest the surface skin heal while the wound beneath lingers and once isolated from the air cannot heal properly. Deep wounds take time to heal and we must be careful not to rush the process.



As I consider Scripture and my training/experiences in counseling, I have constructed a Spectrum of Forgiveness. The Spectrum allows us to consider where we are and where we are going on the journey of forgiveness of a grievance or offense. It allows us to consider what levels of forgiveness can be pursued unilaterally (i.e., by ourselves with God’s help) and what levels of forgiveness can only be pursued bilaterally (i.e., by the cooperative activity between the offender and you with God’s help).

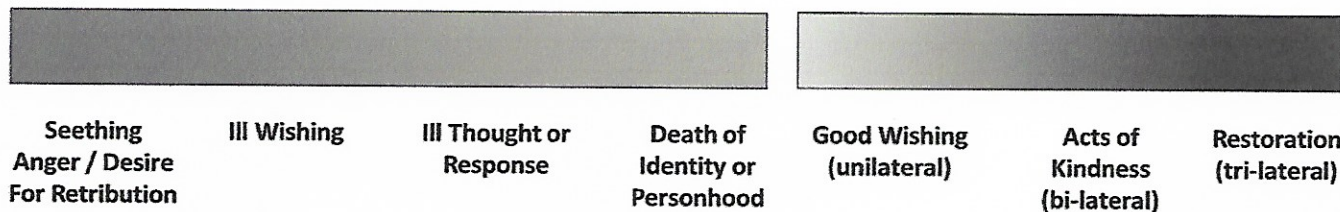


Figure 1. Spectrum of Forgiveness

When a serious offense is perceived, we probably find ourselves somewhere on the red side of the Spectrum. It may last an instant or a season or even longer. Yes, even Believers can find themselves

experiencing seething anger and imagining violence, even if they quickly shift to less destructive thoughts (e.g., wishing ill for or thinking ill of the offender). Even if the person is someone we love, we may find ourselves engaged in silent character assassination that looks like “He/she can’t do any better because he/she is simply a (fill in the slander) person.”

There are two reasons we start out in the red part of the Spectrum after an offense is given, one is noble and the other is not. The noble reason is that we are made in the image of God. We are designed to have an angry response to injustice. Sadly, this noble response to injustice is highly contaminated by our own fallenness. If it were not so, we would be just as offended by injustice done to someone else as when it is done to us. Our red response is contaminated with self-interest and amplified by strong emotions that often have their roots in the past. So, while we need to be honest about our feelings, we must also draw on spiritual wisdom (both biblical knowledge and Holy Spirit help) to navigate the forgiveness process.

Please note that on the red side of the Spectrum is Death of Identity or Personhood. This occurs when our coping strategy is to pretend that the offending person no longer exists. We tell ourselves that “I simply do not care about that person and therefore that person has no power over me.” Do not kid yourself into believing that this strategy is somehow neutral, between red and green. It is clearly red. The commandment from our Lord is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27) To commit ourselves to doing something less than what our Lord commands is clearly red. It also means that our conclusion that the individual has no power over us is a total lie; the person has the power to get us to willingly disregard our Lord’s command.

Wherever we start on the Spectrum after an offense, God’s goal is that we move to the right and the we get to green. The Good News is that getting to green is always a possibility. In the green section of the Spectrum, there are three activities: 1) wishing the offender well (including praying for them), 2) helping the offender, and 3) achieving a restored relationship with the offender.

Working our way from red to green on the Spectrum of Forgiveness involves two activities. One is the activity of letting go and the other is the activity of latching on.

“...we must let go of those thoughts that hold us captive in the red and we must latch on to the healing and enabling power of God’s love.”

Although it is seldom as straightforward as I am about to put it, we must let go of those thoughts that hold us captive in the red and we must latch on to the healing and enabling power of God’s love. True and complete forgiveness requires both letting go and latching on. One sign of true and complete forgiveness is that it is free of setbacks into the red. But if we fail to let go and put distance between ourselves and those thoughts that held us captive in the red, they might pull us back when we least expect it.

In the green portion of the Spectrum, only the first of these healing and forgiving activities rely solely on you and God. With God’s grace, you will someday be able to sincerely ask God to bless the one who has offended you. At first, you may find you are simultaneously in the red on the Spectrum, even while you are praying for blessing. Do not be surprised by this. But as you pray, it is my experience that most people find that the power of the offense is greatly diminished and eventually disappears. This letting go of the offense occurs as a natural and subconscious consequence of interceding for the offender. As you are their advocate before the throne, your heart no longer desires to condemn, as your spirit and heart wrestle with the silliness of advocating and

... love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

~ Matthew 5:44-45 ~

condemning at the same time. In God's economy of grace, the power of the offense is broken as you faithfully pursue our Lord's command to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:44-45) In praying for our enemies and those who have offended us, we become free from the crushing power of ill-feeling and resentment that steals joy from our lives. Latching onto the command of our Lord to pray for those who have hurt us is the best path for letting go of what is holding us down.

We say that God's love is unconditional. This is often subconsciously translated into God's forgiveness is unconditional. As a consequence, we have faulty ideas of what it means to forgive others the way God forgives us. Because of these wrong ideas about forgiveness, we often try to achieve what is not ours to achieve on our own. We are surprised and discouraged when we fail to achieve higher levels of forgiveness. It is helpful to correct our understanding of the higher levels of forgiveness so that we acknowledge that they have conditions. They are conditional for God and they are conditional for us.

God's Forgiveness can be Conditional

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

* - God and we can do some acts of kindness without the cooperation of the one being helped. But, even for God, forgiveness in the day-to-day of living is conditional upon our confession.

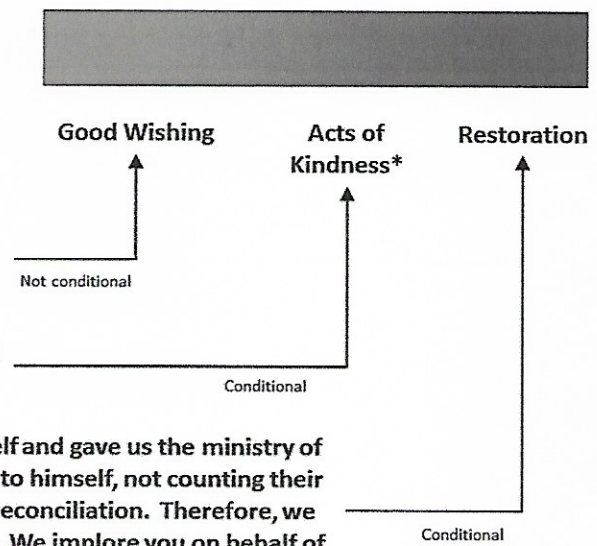


Figure 2: God's Forgiveness Can Be Conditional

In Romans 12:18-21, we are encouraged to bless our enemies with acts of kindness (e.g., feeding them if they are hungry). Pursuing Acts of Kindness is not always something we can pursue on our own, even with God's help. Even if we have it within our heart to help someone, it is often a requirement that they let us help them. In other words, help is often bilateral. Certainly, there are some things we might be able to do anonymously, but most helping will require permission and cooperation. This helping does not require a change of heart on the part of the offense giver, but it does require his/her permission to let us help. We

should reflect on the meaning of 1 John 1:9; God's forgiveness of our day-to-day sins is conditioned upon our confession. This level of forgiveness is a cooperative and bilateral effort.

Moving all the way to the right in the Spectrum brings us to Reconciliation. This is the "gold standard" of forgiveness. As such, Christians often pursue it without regard to all the practical and biblical considerations. First, Reconciliation is not really up to us to achieve. Second, fake Reconciliation may be dangerous to us and other loved ones we are obliged to protect. Remember, that when God reconciles the world (Believers) to himself, it begins with a changed heart. (**2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 3:16-17**) This is a principle we should understand: Reconciliation requires a new heart (at least one and maybe two). It is the new heart that allows both trust and trust-worthiness. The giving of a new heart is clearly the work of God and so I to think about Reconciliation as a trilateral activity of offender, offende, and God acting on both of them.

Without a changed heart, Reconciliation may not only be impossible, but attempting Reconciliation may be dangerous. The individual with whom we wish to be reconciled may be dangerous to us and/or our family financially, emotionally, spiritual, physically, etc. Healthy boundaries are appropriate. The health of the boundary is determined by two things: 1) where it is drawn and 2) why it is drawn. The same boundary can be drawn out of love and caring or out of resentment and hurt.

My last thoughts on forgiveness bring us back to the chief end of humans, "to glorify God and enjoy him forever." (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q1) Forgiveness is a key to enjoying and glorifying God. Our unforgiveness is a terrible impediment to our relationship with our Father in heaven. After all, in unforgiveness, we are holding back blessing from someone who is also our Father's son or daughter. Secondly, it is when obedience is hard that it most glorifies our Lord. We undertake the hard thing because it pleases God and we do it with an attitude of yielding to God's will and dying to self-will. This supremely glorifies God.

This is a big article that covers a lot of territory. If you feel that you would like some help in applying the teaching in this article to your life, please let me know so we can schedule a time to talk. Let me summarize some of the key points below:

1. Forgiveness is big with God.
2. Being made in the image of God, we are designed to be Forgiving.
3. Deep hurts sometimes occur because older hurts have not healed.
4. Deep hurts take time to heal.
5. Forgiveness occurs on a Spectrum; it is not a single thing or condition.
6. Forgiveness involves two activities: letting go of emotional poison and latching onto God's healing love and power.
7. Pretending someone does not exist is a form of unforgiveness.
8. Fake forgiveness will someday result in a setback that will surprise and discourage us.
9. Praying for our enemies is something we can do, and it promotes our own healing.
10. Some levels of forgiveness are conditional and we are not in control of those conditions.

*[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.*

~ Psalm 103:10-14 ~

THE PRESBYTERIAN POST

JUNE 2019



JUNE BIRTHDAYS

JUNE 2	Karen Fitzgerald
JUNE 14	Betty Jones
JUNE 20	Kelly Flint
JUNE 21	Nelson Whiteman
JUNE 21	Loretta Crossett
JUNE 21	Lorraine Glidden
JUNE 26	Joyce Panicola
JUNE 29	Jonathan Haines
JUNE 29	Mark LaBourr

JULY BIRTHDAYS

JULY 1	Josh Stauring
JULY 2	Rachel Haines
JULY 2	Katie Karns
JULY 5	Jason Ells
JULY 6	Alan Schultheis
JULY 6	Roberta Gardner
JULY 10	Gabrielle Kennell
JULY 11	Louise Flanders
JULY 19	Jesse Ells
JULY 19	Diane Ells
JULY 23	Mike Whiteman
JULY 24	Janet Sliter
JULY 24	Lorraine Smith



JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

JUNE 11	Ed and Katie Karns
JUNE 19	Bob and Judy Osborn

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

JULY 28	Frank and Lois Owens
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ELEVATOR SCHEDULE

JUNE 2	Bob Osborn
JUNE 9	Jim Robords
JUNE 16	Mark Stover
JUNE 23	Mike Whiteman
JUNE 30	Nelson Whiteman

NEWS AND NOTES

FAMILY PICNIC CANCELLED

The family picnic scheduled for June 9th following worship has been cancelled.

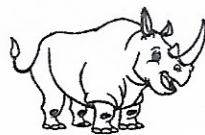
TURNING POINT ITEMS NEEDED

Laundry Soap and Cleaning Supplies or any other item you wish to donate. Thank You!

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

There will be no July or August Newsletter but a summer edition sometime towards the end of July.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



SAVE THE DATE



ROAR Vacation Bible School

is coming to Arkport Presbyterian Church

Sunday, June 23: 6:30-8 PM

Mon-Thurs, June 24-27: 6-8 PM

age 3 through grade 6

Music--Bible Stories--Crafts--Games
{ bring your backpack every day }





Moms Together

The Moms Together completed their regular year on May 16th. Emily Guthrie is coordinator and Megan Wilson is treasurer. Each did an excellent job once again.

Attendance varies due to schedules and illness, but there are 10 moms in the group. They take turns providing a savory and a sweet snack each week.

The book used this year was "Songs of Jesus" by Tim Keller. Some weeks involve crafts or cooking. Lots of sharing and encouragement takes place each week.

The moms will continue to meet informally over the summer on the First & Third Thursdays. The group plans to meet at a park or at one of the mom's homes. There will be no summer child care provided.

Thank you to Diane Kendall and Diane Ells for providing child care during the school year. Liz Kernan and Regie Stover serve as the Mentor Moms.

Please pray for these faith-filled young moms and their families. There are new babies on the way as well to be lifted up in prayer.

Arkport Presbyterian Church

June 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 ELDER OF THE MONTH: DARLA KENNEL	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 COMMUNION SUNDAY 2 CENTS A MEAL	3	4 9:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY	5 8:45 AM - WinGS MEET 6:00 PM - CASUAL WORSHIP 7:00 PM - BIBLE STUDY	6 LADIES CLEAN IN THE EVENING	7	8
9	10	11 9:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY	12 8:45 AM - WinGS MEET 6:00 PM - CASUAL WORSHIP 7:00 PM - BIBLE STUDY	13 LADIES CLEAN IN THE EVENING	14	15
16	17	18 9:00 AM - BIBLE STUDY	19 8:45 AM - WinGS MEET 6:00 PM - CASUAL WORSHIP 7:00 PM - BIBLE STUDY	20 LADIES CLEAN IN THE EVENING	21	22
23 6:30 - 8:00 PM Roar VBS	24 6:00 - 8:00 PM Roar VBS	25 6:00 - 8:00 PM Roar VBS	26 8:45 am - WinGS 6:00 - 8:00 PM Roar VBS	27 6:00 - 8:00 PM Roar VBS	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6