

The Power of **Restorative Forgiveness** in the Weakness of our **Broken Relationships**

What should you do when you have been deeply wounded and hurt?

Who is it that needs restorative forgiveness today?

2 Corinthians 2:1-4

For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. ...

For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. ...

(continued) 2 Corinthians 2:5-11:

Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure —not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. ...

For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

- 2 Corinthians 2:1-11

The Power of “Restorative Forgiveness”

1. “Restorative **FORGIVENESS**”
2. “**RESTORATIVE** forgiveness”
3. “**RESTORATIVE FORGIVENESS**”

The Power of “Restorative Forgiveness”

1. “Restorative **FORGIVENESS**”

a. Forgiveness entails pain.

Verse 1-5: For I made up my mind not to make another **painful** visit to you. 2 For if I cause you **pain**, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have **pained**? 3 And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer **pain** from those who should have made me rejoice,...

for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. 4 For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you **pain** but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you. 5 Now if anyone has caused **pain**, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.

a. Forgiveness entails pain.

- 1) Pain of being wronged
- 2) Pain of reconciliation
- 3) Pain that impacts community

a. Forgiveness entails pain.

b. It is important for us to not downplay but acknowledge the pain.

Carrie Fisher: *“Resentment is like drinking poison and then waiting for the other person to die.”*

- a. Forgiveness entails pain.
- b. It is important for us to not downplay but acknowledge the pain.
- c. In the context of our pain, forgiveness is called for.

Verses 5-7a: Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to **forgive** and comfort him...

- Our culture:*
- a. Unconditional forgiveness (cheap grace)
 - b. Transactional forgiveness (little grace)
 - c. No forgiveness (no grace)
- *Drawn from Tim Keller, *Forgiveness*

Biblical Forgiveness (costly grace):
Vertical -> Internal -> Horizontal
Upward -> Inward -> Outward

What does forgiveness mean?

Tim Keller: "To forgive is to (a) name the wrong truthfully as indeed wrong and punishable (rather than merely excusing it) but also to (b) identify with the perpetrator as a fellow sinner, to (c) release the wrongdoer from liability from personal payback by absorbing the debt oneself (rather than merely pardoning), and finally to (d) aim for reconciliation and the restoration of the relationship that was broken by the wrong."

Two more important thoughts on forgiveness (Keller, Forgiveness):

1. The misunderstanding of forgiveness (what forgiveness is NOT)

Excusing: An excuse eliminates the need for forgiveness. And sometimes if perpetrators are confronted and give a good explanation of the reason for their actions, we may accept it and excuse them. But that is not forgiveness.

Denying or whitewashing: Forgiveness is not pretending a sin is not a sin. It is not denial or pretense that it did not happen. In fact, forgiveness starts by taking the full measure of the debt and cost. The price cannot be paid unless it is reckoned.

Only refraining from active revenge: Many say, "I forgive but I cannot forget." That often means, "I won't actively seek to harm you now, but I will treat you with coldness and root for you to fail, because you still owe me." In short, you refuse to make the inward payments and instead you wait for bad things to happen to the person until you feel they have paid.

Suspending judgment: It is possible to say, "I'll forgive you this time, but next time I won't be so nice." That means: "I am counting this against you, but it is not enough for full revenge yet. But I am keeping it in your account! You are on probation."

Weaponizing condescending mercy:

There is a way to say “I forgive you” that is really saying, “Look how much better I am than you - I am overlooking this!” It is also a way of implying, “Since I have forgiven you, I expect a whole lot out of you.” You are actually saying, “You owe me a lot of bowing and scraping, since I did not go after revenge.” That is a form of revenge.

Abandoning justice: Justice calls the wrongdoer to admit the sin to God, to the wronged, and to bear whatever the penalty either God’s law or human law requires. Justice is pursued for God’s sake, for the other potential victims’ sake, and even for the perpetrator’s sake. People tend to either seek personal revenge in the belief that that is justice or not seek any justice at all. One is vindictiveness and the other cowardice.

Immediate trust: Sometimes people think that forgiveness means we have to immediately resume the relationship with the wrongdoer at the level it was before. But until a person shows evidence of true change, we should not trust the person. To immediately re-trust a person with sinful habits could actually be enabling him or her to sin. ...

Infamously, many churches have fully restored molesters to places of trust and authority because, they say, this is what forgiveness entails. But Jesus did not automatically restore Peter without a well-known and thorough process (John 21). Trust must be restored, but the speed at which this occurs depends on the response of the offender to correction.

Two more important thoughts on forgiveness (Keller, Forgiveness):

1. The misunderstanding of forgiveness (what forgiveness is NOT)

2. There is **inward** and **outward** forgiveness.

Mark 11:25 (inward): “forgive” means inwardly being willing to not avenge oneself.

*“And whenever you stand praying, **forgive**, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”*

Luke 17:3-4 (outward): “forgive them” entails being “reconciled to them.”

*“If your brother or sister sins **against you**, rebuke them; and if they repent, **forgive them**. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying, ‘I repent’, you must **forgive them**.”*

Inward and outward: also called “attitudinal forgiveness” and “reconciled forgiveness”

- a) Not two different kinds, but two aspects/stages of forgiveness
- b) First must always happen, but second might not always happen
- c) First is not contingent on the second, but the second is contingent on the first

The Power of “Restorative Forgiveness”

1. “Restorative **FORGIVENESS**”
2. “**RESTORATIVE** forgiveness”

Restorative - What this means

1. Comfort

*Verse 6: For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and **comfort** him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.*

Comfort: not coldness nor callousness

Restorative - What this means

1. Reaffirm love

Verse 8: So I *beg* you to **reaffirm your love** for him.

Reaffirm: not revenge, recoil, retaliate, rebuff

One more thought:

Comfort and reaffirming love doesn't automatically mean “trust.”

Tim Keller: *“I forgive you’ does not mean ‘I trust you.’ Some people think they haven’t reconciled until they can completely retrust the person who did the wrong. That is not the case. Forgiveness means a willingness to try to reestablish trust, but that reestablishment is always a process.”...*

“The speed and degree of this restoration entails the re-creation of trust, and that takes time, depending on the nature and severity of the offenses involved. Until a person shows evidence of true change, we should not trust the person. To immediately retrust a person with sinful habits could actually be enabling him to sin.”...

“ Trust must be restored, and the speed at which this occurs depends on the behavior. Just because you don’t (and shouldn’t) trust a person who wronged you as you did before doesn’t mean you don’t have a reconciled relationship with him or her.”

- Tim Keller, Forgiveness

The Power of “Restorative Forgiveness”

1. “Restorative **FORGIVENESS**”
2. “**RESTORATIVE** forgiveness”
3. “**RESTORATIVE FORGIVENESS**”

Two things Paul says:

1. Restorative forgiveness as **DISCIPLESHIP**:

Verse 9: For this is why I wrote, that I might **test** you and know whether you are obedient in everything.

2. Restorative forgiveness as **SPIRITUAL WARFARE**:

Verses 10-11: Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the **presence of Christ**, so that we would not be **outwitted by Satan**; **for we are not ignorant of his designs.**

Satan's schemes: to divide, create havoc, be resentful; to hate, kill and destroy.

"I have every right to hold a grudge."

"If I forgive, he/she wins and I lose."

"Getting even will show them that I cannot be treated this way."

Paul says we are not to be ignorant of the devil's schemes. This is a spiritual battle. Spiritual battle means *we don't have the resources on our own to address this...*

But we have **one** who does!

Verse 10: "in the presence of Christ"

- Jesus experienced pain
- Jesus extends and grants forgiveness
- Jesus restores: He comforts and reaffirms his love for us

Reflection and Prayer:

1. *Who needs restorative forgiveness in your life today?*
2. *"Lord, how do you want me to respond to your Word today?"*