

BC-11

Forgiveness And Restoration; Tragedy And Decision-Making Among *Christians

*assumed to be true.

What we are going to discuss tonight are three areas within counseling that are very common.

In other words, there is a very good chance you will encounter Christians with problems related to one of these 3 things....

Which means that EACH of these represent a diagnosis and therefore something you should be looking for as a possible diagnosis in relation to the problems being expressed by those you are counseling.

Sometimes it will be very apparent (ex. They will tell you this is their problem); other times it will NOT be as obvious, but as you talk to them, and listen to what they are struggling with, then you will know it is one of these three...

First of which is the problem of...

I. Forgiveness And Restoration

A big part of counseling involves forgiveness and restoration. Many times, people's physical problems as well as relational problems are the result of failing to practice proper, biblical forgiveness and restoration. It is not just those in the world (unbelievers) who have a problem with this. It is also those within the Church (Christians).

And that is serious problem since the bible teaches that one of the consequences to failing to forgive is MORE than just physical or relational problems—BUT God the Father not forgiving us!

(Mat 6:14-15)

So we must understand this—if we are to help others (and if we ourselves) are to make sure we are those practicing it (as well as restoration) in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to GOD—something which causes us to receive His forgiveness also.

Having said that (then)...

Here is what we need to know as it relates to the subject of forgiveness:

Who We Are To Forgive, Why We Are To Forgive, When We Are To Forgive, What Forgiveness Does Not Require and then (finally in relation to this first subject), What Hinders Us (or others) From Doing It (which is also important to understand—especially if we have diagnosed someone as being delinquent in this area.)

So (the Who, the Why, the When, the What and the What)—5 Things total...

BUT before we CAN discuss these...

We must (first) possess a...

A. Biblical Definition Of Forgiveness

((1Th 5:15))

(So this is what it means to forgive others)...

It means...

NOT seeking revenge against them for that have done to you (“returning evil for evil”) but instead determining to seek their good in all things going forward after their offense against you.

Which leads me directly to our first point under this subject...

1. Who We Are To Forgive

Any and all who sin against us.

((Mar 11:25))

2. Why We Are To Forgive

The basis for such an attitude and determined actions toward those who have offended or sinned against you (as was just mentioned) and as we saw in (together) in 1thessalonians 5 is because of

God’s forgiveness of us. (Eph 4:32)

This is why WE forgive---because He has forgiven US.

3. When We Are To Forgive

Immediately!

(Mar 11:25) (Luk 17:3-10)—both of these verses imply immediacy in forgiveness.

Also 1Th 5:15—“Always seek...”

From how the Bible views forgiveness, we see that it is to be a constant attitude and state of mind.

4. What Forgiveness Does Not Require

i. It does not require that their sin is small or happens only a limited number of times.

We are to forgive others regardless of how many times or how big their sin is against us.

((Mat 18:21-27))

Q: How DOES this passage relate to God’s forgiveness of us:

God is the king to whom we owe a debt which is so high we could not possibly pay it even if we gave everything starting from the day of our birth and ending at the day of our death. (It would require 150,000 years worth of wages!)

This (then) is why also the consequences are so severe for us if we do not forgive others for what(in comparison) is so small...((Mat 18:28-35))

ii. It does not require that they are repentant for what they have done.

We are to forgive others regardless whether or not they are sorry (or repentant)

((Luke 17:3-10))

Q: How does this passage relate to God's forgiveness of US?

It doesn't from the standpoint of requiring repentance since God requires that in order to forgive us. However, the reason why He can require that (and not us) is because He is innocent of all sin and any debt to anyone. Such a person is the only one WHO can rightly require the repentance of others just as such a person is the only one who can rightly condemn or judge another. It is only a person who is perfect who can truly "cast a stone" yet not be a hypocrite in doing so(Joh 8:7) . Additionally, because repentance to God requires (also) willing and complete submission to His authority, this means He has the right to command the kind of forgiveness we see in this text. We are to do it as His "unworthy servants" because this is a part of what He demands from us in obeying Him (iow: this is not extra credit!).

This (however) brings up another question regarding our judgment and condemnation of others. If God is the only One who can rightly do those things (or demand repentance) then DOES that mean we should never judge, condemn or demand repentance?

NO. And the reason why that is the case is because God (as our authority) has commanded that we do those things. Yet how we do them needs to be based on His authority (i.e. the authority of His Word) and not our own.

Example: When I tell somebody that homosexuality is wrong—it is not that is judging or condemning—because it is the Word which says that it is wrong. I am merely speaking (as commanded) for the real and rightful JUDGE—God Himself. Which means we'd better make sure what we say, judge, condemn or command is in line with Him and His WORD!

iii. It does not require that we forget or never bring it up.

Some have defined forgiveness this way—but never do you find it in the BIBLICAL text. As a matter of fact it is contrary to what we see practiced in the Scripture.

Example from the Apostle Paul in qualifying an elder: If a wife knows that her husband is not a "one woman man" as the Scripture's require, does that mean she shouldn't bring it up since he is forgiven?

Examples from the Apostle Paul's own life:

-Paul doesn't relate to his own sin that way though God had forgiven him (1Ti 1:13)

-Paul (no doubt) forgave Peter for his sin against the churches—yet still brought it up as a teaching tool and as a means of defending the churches against heresy (Gal 2:11ff)

Examples from God Himself: (2Co 5:10; Dan 12:13; Rev 20:11-15)

*What matters when bringing things up: Are we doing it still seeking their good?

iv. It does not require foregoing restitution

Restitution CAN be the means by which the person who has sinned against US—seeks to demonstrate that their repentance.

Additionally, restitution can also be HOW the sinning person demonstrates repentance to the ONE they have SINNED (first and foremost) against—and that is GOD.

This was the REASON why Zaccheus did what he did...

Luke 19 says that he was the chief tax-collector—which means that he was the chief extortionist and thief among his people, YET as a demonstration of his repentance and receiving Jesus—he says to Him in verse 8...

"Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

AND whether or NOT Zaccheus ever restored the TRUST of those he had exploited by doing this, we will never know—BUT one thing we do know—these people received restitution as a demonstration of his repentance to them (and more importantly) to GOD.

SO restitution is NOT out of the question---especially AS it concerns CHRISTIANS.

IF we do something in sin AGAINST another person which CAN be compensated for—we should be willing to pay as a demonstration of our repentance to them—and to GOD.

And since (that is what it is) it should NOT be refused by the other person—the ONE forgiving them for what they DID.

They should accept it with gratitude—understanding that this person does it in repentance

v. It does not require foregoing justice or punishment.

Personal justice is never okay (Mat 5:38-42; Rom 12:9; 1Co 6:1-7)—BUT justice ordained by God is commanded!

(Rom 13:1-3; 1Pe 2:13-14; Mat 18:17; 1Co 5:13)

Our forgiveness of others should never negate, circumvent or destroy God's ordained and commanded forms of justice—rather it should uphold it since in doing so we are honoring HIM.

In this way, God also carries out His forgiveness of us. It includes punishment/justice along with forgiveness. As a matter of fact, it is the justice which makes forgiveness possible! (Rom 3:21-26)

Other texts to consider related to God: (Psa 99:8; 2Sa 12:9-14; Num 14:20-23)

*What this all means as it relates to our forgiveness of others:

WE should DESIRE (always) that GOD'S law is obeyed in the lives of others and by that He is glorified THROUGH them---AND where justice in some form of punishment or payment WOULD be the BEST way TO teach that---THEN that is WHAT we should seek.---BUT (again) NOT for our own satisfaction—but for their GOOD—and for GOD'S GLORY.

And this is the REASON (then) THAT the BIBLE calls parents to discipline their children—which (at times) requires some form of punishment or payment.

NOT so the parent can MAKE the child “pay” for violating the parents rights or property (iow: not because Johnny broke mom's favorite lamp and so mom is going to make him suffer—to do that is not Biblical—but sinful because you are acting for your own justice)

The reason WHY is BECAUSE through the punishment, the parent is TEACHING that child the importance of obeying God's LAW---of upholding His JUSTICE.

And this form of punishment is (again)-- NOT the denial of FORGIVENESS—but actually the expression OF IT---HOW the parent is LOVING the child in forgiveness.

Which is WHY Proverbs 13:24 says “He who loves his son disciplines him diligently”.

THIS is the REASON WHY (also) that the church is CALLED (at times) to discipline members...

Though we forgive ALL people who SIN against us—or the church; when IT is a member of the church—and they ARE unrepentant for what they are doing---THEN what is required of US (as part of seeking their good—meaning their eternal good) is TO put them out of the church (iow: to discipline them).

And the basis FOR such ACTION is the hope that by doing so—THEY would SEE the seriousness of disobeying GOD'S LAW---and by that act of JUSTICE (on our part) –REPENT and bring GOD His due GLORY.

vi. It does not require that we trust them.

Scenario to illustrate: You leave your child with a baby-sitter only to find out later that the baby-sitter has molested your child. You must forgive them—but does that mean you will let them baby-sit your child next week? (Pro 22:3)

5. What Hinders Us From Forgiving Others (Mat 18:28-35)

i. We minimize our sin (against God) and maximize other's sin against us

((28-30))

ii. We inflate God's mercy and discount His justice

((31-34))

iii. We forget about God's great forgiveness to us

((32-33))

iv. We don't believe God would withhold His forgiveness from us

((35))

(1Jo 1:9)-misused and abused. Once knew a man who put a shotgun in his mouth and blew his brains out after leaving a note which had this verse on it and said that he had confessed what he was about to do so it was okay.

(Mat 6:14-15) (Mar 11:25)

B. A Biblical Definition Of Restoration

Allowing those who have sinned back into their former relationship with us, with all its former entitlements and privileges based on belief that God has forgiven them.

That is Biblical restoration. And as I mentioned earlier—it LIKE FORGIVENESS is an area where many Christians miss it!

Either they are restoring people that shouldn't yet be restored—or they are not restoring when they should be restoring!

This happened at Corinth—which is why PAUL writes what he does in ((2Co 2:6-9))

What Paul means by "forgive" here is "restore" –it is declaring God's forgiveness of them which means that they are ready to be granted the rights and privileges they had before.

1. Why we know that is what Paul is speaking about:

i. Because of Jesus' clear teaching on forgiveness not being conditional (Luk 17:3-10)

ii. Because of Jesus' teaching in John 20:23 compared to similar teaching in Matthew 18:18

SO this is Biblical restoration, having said that though—

There is ONLY final thing that NEEDS to be established as it relates to this issue—and that is

2. When To Restore

And the answer is...

Only when it is clear there has been genuine repentance.

Signs of genuine repentance:

i. confession and *changed behavior (Pro 28:13)

* the severity of the offense as well as the status of their former position will always determine the length of time needed to confirm this (1Ti 5:22, 24-25; 1Ti 3:2, 7)

ii. sorrow (2Co 7:9-10)

Any questions before we move on?

II. Tragedy

How do we help people who have just experienced some form of tragedy?

A. By first just listening and showing compassion

(Rom 12:15)—this verse by the way shows that we don't always have to have an answer for what they are going through.

Trying to provide that can actually make things worse. This is what happened with Job's friends and why they ended up being such bad counselors—because they opened their mouths!

B. When the time comes, reminding them of God's sovereignty (Psa 103:19), goodness (Gen 18:25) and wisdom (Rom 11:33-36) in all things.

This is what you want them to be thinking about as the means by which to deal with this...(versus that it was all just a big mistake that God never wanted to happen).

C. Encourage them to cast their anxiety upon God through prayer and not allow it burden them

(1Pe 5:8)

(Well, that leaves me with one final thing to cover tonite)...and that is the topic of...

III. Decision –Making

BUT-- for sake of time I have simply made it into a worksheet which you can use with those you counsel.

And feel free to make copies of these...

You will find it as the last page of your notes...

Let me show you how it works..

God's Revealed Will in Decision-Making

There are two areas we must understand if we are to discern God's will for our lives in a given area:
His Providence and His Precepts.

I. PROVIDENCE: the acknowledgement of His sovereignty.

What has God called me to be?

1.

2.

3.

4.

II. PRECEPTS: The acknowledgement of His commands

What does God command me to do?

1.

2.

3.

4.