

## JACK'S CORNER Part II

**QUESTION:** Regarding last month's *Jack's Corner* on forgiveness...What happens and how does one handle the situation when the hoped-for forgiveness and reconciliation do not come forth?

**ANSWER: (Last month's article addressed forgiveness between a parent and child.)** Let me begin by saying that children are **usually** far more forgiving and honest than most adults. Most children really want to set things right. They usually lack the bitterness, resentment, and punishing behaviors present in adults (But they do learn these behaviors well from watching how adults behave.). Forgiveness is usually much more true and honest when it comes from children. They usually lack the sinful subterfuge of adult interrelationships.

Often we adults (particularly in the church) (1) ignore a wrong, (2) numb ourselves to a wrong, or (3) flee from a wrong ...then we call it "forgiveness." Think of someone in the church who has wronged you ...do you presently try to ignore him? Do you pretend the wrong really wasn't that bad so you don't have to acknowledge your true feelings? Do you no longer have anything to do with her? Do you relate to him with "polite aloofness"? Such behaviors are not forgiveness.

**True forgiveness is continuing to involve yourself in the life of someone who has wronged you, as if the wrong didn't happen, FOR THE PURPOSE OF the transformation of both of you.** True forgiveness transcends mere feelings. It is tremendously costly. True forgiveness transforms both the giver and the receiver. True forgiveness is only possible with God's transcendence.

Rarely do adults (1) enter deeply the life of someone who has wronged them, (2) confront him/her in Christian love, and then (3) continue in relationship with him/her. Numbing, fleeing or ignoring is the usual tactic. If there is confrontation, rarely is it done in Christian love; and hence, usually destroys the relationship (From that point on, at some level, there is emotional withdrawal from the person.). Children are usually better at the "living out" of forgiveness.

With these thoughts in mind...if the "hoped-for forgiveness does not come forth", there is a wonderful (but heart-breaking) opportunity from God to be on your knees consistently for the sake of your child. Such behavior in a child is a clear window into the soul and speaks volumes about your child's spiritual needs and about your relationship with him. Things are far worse than you thought. How will you pray for and live out the character of Christ in your child's life? How does he see forgiveness demonstrated in your life? How has he experienced reconciliation through your actions and words? How will you make your relationship with him so attractive that he will be hungry to forgive and reconcile?

Whether or not you receive the "hoped-for" forgiveness, there is opportunity for both of you to be transformed (sanctified). Rejoice, and thank God for the possibilities! Only God can command forgiveness. He perfectly forgives, so he can require us to forgive (MT 6:12, 14,15).

Jack Lipski, M.A.

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