

Forgiveness

Sometimes the injury is slight; other times it is major. Regardless of the severity, you feel something must be done to right a wrong. Your sense of justice demands retribution. Such feelings are common, part and parcel of the human condition. Yet, our calling as Christians requires of us a radically different response when a wrong has been committed. Jesus himself set the standard for forgiveness; the behaviors He expects are clearly not what the world demands. He teaches that we have heard it said, *“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”* But He tells us, *“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”* (Matthew 5:38-39) Was it perhaps this understanding that caused the outpouring of forgiveness by church members to the man who had entered their sanctuary during Bible study and randomly shot and killed those gathered? In the reports of what transpired, there was no mention of attempted defense or retaliation.

The old saying, “I can forgive, but I can’t forget,” does not meet Jesus’ forgiveness standard. In Romans, Paul writes: *“Do not repay anyone evil for evil...If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge...but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:17-19, 21)

Forgiveness comes through a process: (1) You must acknowledge the offense. (2) *You must identify the offender.* (3) *Talk to someone “spiritual” about how you feel.* (4) *Seek God for healing and forgiveness.*

Often it is said that an unforgiving spirit is as harmful as the wrong that provoked it. The believer’s most powerful weapon when dealing with the issue of forgiveness is prayer. The Lord’s Prayer offers the simple yet effective recourse: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It is when you forgive others when they sin against you that God in turn forgives your sins. Forgiving and being forgiven are the keys to being at peace with God and man.

If you are struggling with the issue of forgiveness, and need to speak with someone, please send us an e-mail at Care@cascadeumc.org. If you are feeling anxious and need to share your thoughts immediately, call the church office at (404) 691-5770 during office hours. After 6:00 p.m. and on weekends, contact our on-call Pastor by dialing (404) 313-4225.