

LOAF

...And Jesus said, (paraphrasing), “Love One Another and Forgive!” **This** command is perhaps **the** hardest to live out! First, **Love one another**...is it love as a feeling—or an action? *Love as feeling* can be cushy and gushy, full of big red hearts and yellow PEEPS. Love as feeling can be true admiration and tenderness of heart, not to mention attraction. And, love as feeling can be warm and pleasurable, finding the good in the other, and yourself.

Love in action can mean “tough love,” embodied in a family intervention for a practicing alcoholic. Love in action can admonish and guide your brother or sister who is headed down the wrong road. And love in action can mean discipline—no, not just *disciplining*—but discipline—putting in the time & effort to excel. I kinda get “Love one another”—but to **forgive** is a whole different ball game!

Pain, betrayal, humiliation, abuse, manipulation, molestation...these all gain momentum in repetition and intensity and cruelty. The refrain, “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” just doesn’t cut it many times. That’s if one has even taken responsibility or admitted guilt. Many times it’s denial and deceit and discounting—not discussion—that fills the air with ugly silent drama-scripts, killing any possibility for Truth to emerge. And when one gets caught red-handed, the excuses arise like the sun ablaze. Sometimes, in audacity, acting like it never happened at all, or that **you’re** to blame.

I just heard today that not forgiving JUST HURTS YOU because the other probably never even knows that they hurt you. Sure, molest a child and the person never even knows he or she hurt somebody? But sometimes, in a more minor sense, it’s true—someone hurts our feelings and has no consciousness of the offense—until we enlighten him or her. And usually, we don’t let them know about our hurt feelings, out of embarrassment or pride or vulnerability.

We must FORG(iv)E ahead on a path through our own humiliation and vulnerabilities to see what part we played in a situation (if any), to see how we may have been complicit in or unaware of acts that hurt us. “But they did it to me—I didn’t do anything?” This is often true, but you may have played a small role.

One may say, “Finally, it comes down to—someone has hurt us—and we must forgive them!” Really? It’s that easy? Or is it? What about all the residual angst and depression and agony and gut-wrenching pain that may have gone on for months or even years...and we must just forgive?! It’s that simple? They say FAITH is a gift from God...I would have to say that FORGIVENESS is equally a gift from the Creator, and just as consequential, at that, because, without forgiveness, we would have a world of hateful people and unreconciled grievances.

I plead, “GOD, GIVE ME THIS GIFT OF FORGIVENESS so that I can let go of the pain and disappointment. I can’t do it alone. I need *Divine Intervention* to be able to set my heart free and walk in the land of the living. Forgiveness is not my forté. A clenched fist in my heart seems more natural when I’ve been pummeled by life’s indignities. Just as You, God, help me *Love One Another*, I need You to help me to ***forgive.***”

God’s Grace tells me it means opening up my heart to see how the other may have been mistreated in their past, so as to engage in the insensitivity and unawareness to hurt me so deeply. I am called to see how we are ALL broken, in some way—that some of us are just broken more—and more often—so they lash out. I also heard today that HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE! So, if I do not forgive, I become one of those HURT PEOPLE and just pass it on. “Lord, help me build relationships, not tear them down...and if forgiveness is a foundation to that building, help me dig deep, and secure the base, for I want to be a part of the solution, not part of the problem!”

Forgive—give ‘em a break, just let go, and envision how I may just be doing something similar to someone else. I think I remember Jesus saying, once or twice, “Forgive, as you have been forgiven.” That says it all for me. Because many people, and God, have forgiven me, even when I didn’t know it—when I have been unaware of my hurting actions. So why must I hold back my forgiveness of others? But it’s so HARD when I really feel I’ve gotten burned, abused, misled, or handled in a very disrespectful manner. It’s so HARD!

In the end, I need to rely on that *Divine Intervention* and let it go. Maybe I need to start out by saying, “I forgive you,” even if I don’t mean it at first. God will take that weak intention and make cable out of it—steel cable-strong, to pull together a true, heart-felt sense of forgiveness in me. I’ve gotta believe—I DO believe—God can do this for me—in me—and in YOU too! And, in time, we will learn to truly and urgently forgive. This is a Grace I look forward to! Amen.

by Rich Melcher