

# Christian Forgiveness

## Loving Our Enemies From The Cross

“If you, O LORD, keep account of [our] sins, Lord, who can stand” (Psalm 130:3)? We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The first step in forgiving others, then, is being able to acknowledge that we are all broken people. Thus, it becomes a bit easier to respond to the Gospel message of loving and forgiving others. And in doing so, our wounds diminish over time as love conquers.

We have all heard it said that we must hate the sin but not the sinner...loving the sinner is the tough part, and yes, Jesus set the bar really high; Sacred Scripture calls us to love our enemies (Mt 5:43-44) and to forgive others unconditionally (Mt 6:14-15). To better understand, look to horizontal and vertical dimensions of Cross.

In the horizontal dimension of the cross of loving or forgiving one's enemies, it has been taught for decades that when we forgive, we don't have to be friends with, or like them, etc. (i.e. a normal human response of a wounded heart and self-protection) However, if God treated us that way, we would all deserve the eternal torments of hell!

In truth, the essence of the Gospel of loving or forgiving one's enemies lies within the vertical dimension of the Cross..."Father forgive them..."

1. Love from the Cross (look to Jesus as our example and model)
2. Pray for them (Father, forgive them...Luke 23:34)
3. Do good to them (treat others as you want to be treated...Matthew 7:12)
4. Never give up on anyone (Jesus didn't give up on Judas, Judas gave up on Jesus; Jesus didn't give up on us when we were His enemies)
5. Engage (Behold, I stand at the door of your heart and knock...Rev 3:20) unless they remain hostile (if they remain hostile, go back to #1 and repeat)

6. Look for signs of goodwill (When we sin, how do we become reconciled with God? Those are the very signs of goodwill we must look for in others)

7. If there are signs of goodwill, be open to reconciliation but proceed with ongoing discernment (trust is earned over time, but do not put artificial constraints on how long that might be)

8. Have no expectations of the other person (respect their free-will)

9. Allow a potential friendship to develop organically (do not put up roadblocks or build impervious interior walls that block healing; rather, look for the good in them)

10. Should they fall, forgive, go to #1 and repeat (How many times must I forgive my brother [Matthew 18:21-22]? How many times has God done this with me?)

11. We must do this with others if we expect God to do this with us (Forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive others...Matthew 6:12)

12. It's God's method and way of treating us every single day. It's what Jesus did for us! In the end, we'll gain one friend for sure (God), and maybe two (our former enemy)

