

## Forgive Us As We Forgive

### Apologies That Aren't Skit

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

**Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Presbyterian and other Reformed churches tend to use "debts ... debtors". Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists are more likely to say, "trespasses ... those who trespass against us". The "debts" form appears in the first English translation of the Bible, by John Wycliffe in 1395. The "trespasses" version appears in the 1526 translation by William Tyndale. In 1549 the first Book of Common Prayer in English used a version of the prayer with "trespasses". This became the "official" version used in Anglican congregations. I use "debts" because that's the way it reads in NKJV and ESV in Matthew 6.

Brian Zahnd in *Unconditional*, "If Christianity is about anything, it is about forgiveness."

The first words of Jesus from the cross, "Father forgive them..."

**How many of you have ever had trouble with forgiveness?**

### Response to Violation

- Jesus taught us to make repentance and forgiveness a major part of our prayer life.
  - Forgiving others is mostly a matter of prayer.
  - In prayer I can pray repeatedly until I am free from the emotional tension and turmoil.
- Forgiveness precedes repentance
  - Many believe that forgiveness must be withheld until one receives a heartfelt apology. **We can forgive and apologize genuinely as an act of our own will without any reciprocation from the other party.**
  - God forgave, which gives us the opportunity to repent.
  - God's forgiveness of sins through Christ's death, burial and resurrection is the basis for all forgiveness, even between people.
- Stephen and Paul
  - Stoning of Stephen—**Acts 7:51-8:3**
  - Paul's conversion—**Acts 9:1-6**
  - Stephen's forgiveness of those who were killing him leads to Paul's conversion.
  - If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." - **John 20:23** ESV
- Name the violation as such
  - Problems cannot be resolved unless they are named.
  - A boundary has been breached.
  - "I just don't want there to be anything between us," is neither an apology nor forgiveness. I cannot forgive an unnamed feeling of tension.
  - If you simply don't like me, there is not much then for which I can repent!
  - If I have cheated you, spoken ugly to you or about you or violated you in some other way, then it can be named and dealt with.
- Even when I have been violated, I usually also need to repent.

- I need to repent to God and even perhaps to the other person for my sinful response to violation.
- I cannot allow the violation to make me into the image of my violator.
- I can use my suffering to improve myself and make a better world.
- We can suffer and also benefit, in the way that gold is purified.
  - But He knows the way that I take; [When] He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. - **Job 23:10**
  - **Psalm 66:8-12**
  - "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD ... - **Malachi 3:2-4**
- God suffers with victims, comforts them and gives them a new identity. We must do the same.
- Christ identifies with abandonment. "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"
- God does not shun the godless, but gives himself for them in order to receive them into divine communion. We must do the same.
- Miroslav Volf wrote, "To claim the comfort of the Crucified while rejecting his way is to advocate not only cheap grace but a deceitful theology."

### Practical tips

- Don't heap condemnation and guilt on another in your forgiveness speech. Doing so is a sneaky way to appease your own conscience while at the same time condemning the other person.
- Don't dump on the other person just to make yourself feel better.
- Don't apologize vaguely.
- Don't apologize by text or by Facebook. Go to the person or at minimum call them. Allow for real dialogue.
- Don't demand or even expect forgiveness to be extended by the wounded party. I can apologize and forgive without reciprocation. Demanding so reveals my own wickedness and frailty.
- Ask yourself before going to another person to apologize or the forgive, "Will this help the other person? Or is this just about me feeling better?"
- Most forgiveness can be handled in the prayer closet!