

# FAITH ASKING QUESTIONS



A ST FRANCIS COLLEGE SHORT COURSE

THE TRANSCRIPT

## Episode 3 Who Am I?

### 3.4 What happens if someone really hurts me, where does forgiveness fit in?

**Phillip Aspinall:** Forgiveness is a really critical part of human life, it's certainly not easy, but I think when people come to understand that if I refuse to forgive, the person I'm really hurting is myself. Refusing to forgive can be like building a kind of prison around myself. The energy that's required to maintain a grudge, to maintain hatred, it requires an enormous amount of energy which is all negative. Forgiveness is a really central thing in human life, and it can be hard to learn, but I think it's to do with if I want fulness of life for myself, that means being free from all those things that trap, oppress, weigh down, diminish my life. If I'm bearing a grudge, if I'm hating someone for something they've done to me then that's a kind of burden that I'm carrying. So, refusing to forgive hurts me more than it hurts the other person.

**Ceri Wynne:** That's a tough one. I don't like it when people say to me "well you're a priest you should forgive everybody" as if it could occur just like that. Forgiveness, if you've been really hurt by someone you love, that can take a long time to sort itself out, it's not an instant thing. I know when that's happened in my life there's always the Lord's Prayer "forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" so sometimes I actually say "please forgive me that I am not ready to forgive yet, there's still some work that needs to be done". To easily say "yes, I forgive you" is to discount the pain and hurt that you might have felt and suffered.

So, I think people need to be reassured in those cases that you have to take it at your own pace and be ready to let the hurt go. When you're able to let the hurt go, then there is a space maybe for forgiveness, even if you never get the chance to talk with the one who upset you, but at least you get a chance to let that pain go and forgive them in your heart.

And I'm not someone who has been erred against significantly but I know from my own experience that to say to someone "well, you're a person of faith, you should just do it" that's discounting the pain and hurt you can feel, so it can take a long time sometimes for forgiveness to happen. Then to live in relationship with



others. To forgive others. Without forgiveness, we live in a horrible world of hurt, and I think we might in our own lives see people who are consumed by hatred and sometimes self-loathing. And that's miserable.

**Phillip Aspinall:** Whenever I think about forgiveness I think about the story of the woman whose daughter was murdered and the woman hooked up with a local church, and church people started caring for her and the local priest was preparing her for baptism, and they were talking about the promise that's made in baptism "I renounce evil" I reject the power of evil in my life. So, the priest said to this woman, where do you experience the power of evil and out came this story of her daughter being brutally murdered. The priest said, "What will it mean for that experience no longer to control your life?" And she said, "I will need to forgive the murderer". And the priest said, "What will it take for you to do that?" and she said, "I don't know". But she started visiting the murderer in jail and she went every week for two years to see him, before she finally felt that she could forgive him and she could get up in church at her baptism and say "I renounce the power of evil". So that's how the power of forgiveness works, I think.

**John Roundhill:** When you were giving me questions, this was THE question that really provoked me to think. I think that forgiveness is the big story of Christianity. I remember once seeing a YouTube video that said that forgiveness is the real "F word". WOW, and it probably is because it's the thing we find most hard to talk about in our society. We need to be capable of forgiveness. But the more I live, the more I realise that to be capable of forgiveness, I need to know that I am forgiven at a deep, deep level. And you might say, well why is that the case? I think that knowing you're forgiven, allows you to introspect a bit and realise that you are actually freed.

**Josephine Inkpin:** That's one of the hardest things really, and I think it's at the heart of the Christian faith and it's a bit misunderstood. If you carry around with your hurts forever, they'll destroy you and they'll weigh on you...they are like weights that crush you and you've got no space for anything else. So that's really hard. So all of us have been hurt and have that pain, and some of us have pain for other reasons - because of our identity, where people have rejected us and continue to reject us when its embodied in laws, for our race and all those sort of things, or for horrible things that have happened in the past.

So, an apology and a proper act of forgiveness is quite a complex matter, and you've got to do it at the right time. There's a distinction I think between forgiveness and forgetting – I don't think we should ever forget the horrible things that have been done in history for instance or the horrible things in our selves. But it's transforming so that you're not ruling those things out...you're going to be truthful about those things but you don't take them, they don't destroy you anymore and they don't have the power over you because otherwise,



those people, say someone who hurt you really intimately and violently, they continue to hurt you until in a sense you let go of that, into God if you like.

If you can't forgive them at least ask God to forgive them, because maybe you can't ever sort of feel that. Or you ask, through Jesus. You ask them to forgive them. I guess that's the way the Christian faith has functioned to offer another way even if you can't do it yourself.

**Tiffany Sparks:** I think we can't cherry pick our moments in life. Living the human existence has the whole gamut of emotions and experiences. Hurt and anger and resentment are natural parts of the human experience. But for us we are called to move beyond that. I think when someone really hurts you it's important to reflect on what happened and process it, realise that you're going to be tempted to lash out, realise that you might be tempted to move back into that selfish, self-centred focus of its all about me. I always think of the Cain and Abel thing – God saying to Cain, you know watch out because sin is lurking like a tiger at your door. And that's a bit how it is when people hurt you – you feel that tiger waiting to consume you.

But the problem is that every time we give in to that hurt, to that anger we are moving further away from that person that God calls us to be. Forgiveness is an important part for our own selves, our own mental wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing. We can say "Yes that hurt". Because it's important to honour that hurt and it's important to respect that that happened. It's a part of your experience but you can learn from it in every way and gain wisdom and move beyond that anger because you can't live in a world where you are dictated to by your hurts. That doesn't usually make a particularly nice person, you get all twisted and messed up inside.



You can find the video of this session, along with reflection questions for individuals or groups at [www.stfran.qld.edu.au](http://www.stfran.qld.edu.au) under “SFC Short Courses—Faith Asking Questions”.

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