



Forgive one another

Ephesians 4:32

Five Steps to Forgiveness

Read: Luke 23: 33-49

Ever had a bad day? Ever gone from being the hero one day to the villain the next? That is exactly what happened to Jesus. On Palm Sunday Jesus enters Jerusalem as the hero. That very same week he is betrayed by his friend, wrongfully persecuted and then crucified. Talk about a bad day. He should have been bitter and angry. Instead, Jesus chose to forgive his persecutors, setting an example for us. Right or wrong, hero or villain, we all have a role to play in offering forgiveness. But what steps does Jesus ask us to take?

First we must “Go” (Matthew 18:15). It doesn’t matter whether it’s your fault, the other person’s, or something in between. You are called to initiate a reconciliation attempt. If there is friction or a breakdown in your relationship, Jesus says, *Go*, take the first step.

Second, “Go alone”. Jesus tells us to go in “private” (Matt 18:15). Don’t tell others the details of your conflict; take it directly to the other person. Otherwise, we may fall into gossip or slander.

Third, “Go to reconcile the relationship”. When Jesus tells us to go in private he has a goal in mind: to reconcile the relationship. When you go to someone who has wounded you, do so in a spirit of reconciliation. This may require work, patience and prayer.

Fourth, “Go now”. In Matthew 5:24 Jesus says that we must go immediately and be reconciled. We aren’t supposed to wait. Though it may be prudent to let the other person cool off for a bit.

Fifth, “Let it Go”. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, the other party isn’t willing to forgive. In these moments we would be wise to listen to the words of St. Paul, “If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:8). You can’t control other people’s responses, but if you’ve done your best, your conscience is clear before God. You’re released and can let it go.

Forgiveness is hard. Admitting our mistakes and asking someone to forgive us is even harder. But that is exactly what Jesus wants us to do. His example on the cross is a constant reminder that we can be instruments of forgiveness. We must do our best to reconcile with those who have hurt us, even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Grow: Whom do I need to forgive or ask to forgive me?