

# Love and Forgiveness

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Diocesan Times Article - February 2017

February is the month of love. Couples exchange gifts and go on dates. It is a time to celebrate marriages. However, when a marriage relationship goes sideways, some dynamics are always present – hurts, wounded hearts, and a need for forgiveness.



Forgiveness and reconciliation are central to the Gospel message. Sadly, we are not often taught how to appropriate this gift from God.

Jesus was passionate about forgiveness. In the Lord's Prayer, He stated, *"Forgive us our sins as we have already forgiven those who have sinned against us."* (Matthew 6: 12 NKJV) At the end of this famous prayer, Jesus underscores the importance of forgiveness with these words - *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:14-15 NKJV)

OUCH!



However, I have come to a deep understanding. If God commands us to do something, He will give us the capacity to fulfill it, with His help.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a beloved British Poet Laureate. He is second only to William Shakespeare as the most quoted poet in English Literature! He was renowned as a statesman – humble and gracious. Later in life, he published a volume of poetry which won critical acclaim among his peers. Shockingly, a young critic offered a profoundly negative review. The arts community and much of England were scandalized. Several months later, Pope was seen to have lunch with that very same critic. One of the Laureate's friends drew him aside and chided him for being seen in public with the "scoundrel." Pope responded by indicating that he had forgiven the

young man. The onlooker was stunned.

Perhaps a deeper consideration was warranted. After all this was the same dear man who penned the words, "to err is human; to forgive divine..."

Is there anyone you need to forgive? Have you been disappointed in, slighted, betrayed, or wronged by someone? Yes! We can all identify with this. There is a grace needed to "forgive from the heart" as Our Lord demanded (Matthew 18: 35 NKJV). We cannot do this on our own.

Jesus demonstrated the grace to forgive several times in the Gospels. How profound it is to note that Our Saviour declared from his seat of execution, *"Father forgive them..."* (Luke 23:34 NKJV) This has inspired many in the 'process' of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is difficult for most of us. We want justice. We want to see the other person punished for the hurt they have caused us!

Once, as I fought to forgive someone who had betrayed me, leaving me deeply hurt, the Lord gave me a simple prayer: "Lord, I choose to give \_\_\_\_\_ a gift he/she does not deserve. I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_."

Sometimes I've needed to put my name in that prayer.

I always feel a deep release and peace as I struggle and ultimately pray that prayer from my heart.

I believe it will work for you too...