

HOW CAN I FORGIVE WHEN IT HURTS SO MUCH

Many faith traditions observe the season of Lent as a time to focus on forgiveness - forgiving others as well as forgiving ourselves.

- Do you have a hard time forgiving others? Yourself?

In his book *Simply Jesus*, N.T. Wright said, "Forgiveness...is a sort of healing. It removes a burden that can crush and cripple you. It allows you to stand up straight without pretending. It spreads out into whole communities. ...Forgiveness has a claim to be the most powerful thing in the world. It transforms like nothing else."

Desmond Tutu's slogan, "*No Future without Forgiveness*," became the title of his book. Look at what this forgiving attitude did for South Africa.

N.T. Wright wrote reflections on Psalm 130. You will have received some of this via email.

"The deep distress we sense as we read this Psalm has, paradoxically perhaps, given great hope to millions down the years. No matter how deep we have sunk, no matter what sorrows or tragedies we may encounter, the Psalms have been there before us. Not only do they encourage us to believe that we have not, after all, fallen off the map. They give us words so that, when our own words fail to do justice to our misery, they will do instead."

¹ *Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;*

² *Lord, hear my voice.*

*Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.*

³ *If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?*

⁴ *But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

⁵ *I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.*

⁶ *I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

⁷ *Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.*

⁸ *He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.*

“It is out of that sense of helpless and hopeless sadness that the poem cries out: Lord, hear my voice! Listen! If you keep a record of wrongdoing, we'd all be in deep trouble; but what you offer is forgiveness! That's why we worship you! The news of forgiveness, of a free pardon, is the best news of all. The lock is broken; the prison door stands open; we are free to go.”

“It hasn't happened yet. The Psalm ends with redemption, forgiveness, still in the future. Yet the strong affirmation of God's forgiving kindness in verse 4 is the anchor which then, despite all, holds us upright. Then it's a matter of hope and patience: 'waiting', three times repeated in verses 5 and 6, is where it's at.”

Doesn't the psalmist sound like he feels guilty for the way he is feeling? *“But with you there is forgiveness.”*

- Have you ever felt guilty for the way you're feeling, even though it's caused by a disorder? How?
- What helped you deal with your feelings of guilt?

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12-14)