

HOW CAN I FORGIVE WHEN IT HURTS?

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.

“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 so instead.”

*Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy. (Psalm 130:1-2)*

“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.”

The psalmist sounds 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 mental health condition? How?
- What helped you deal with your feelings of guilt?

Eugene Peterson, the writer of the Message wrote:

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. (Colossians 3:12-14)