

## HOW DO I FORGIVE?

Week #20 of an ongoing series on “Unity’s Foundational Teachings”

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What's your experience with forgiveness?

Some of us are really good at it. Others, not so much. So, if you kind of put yourself in the continuum of forgiveness, are you on the, *“You're never going to rip it out of my cold, dead hand!”* or is your position on forgiveness, *“Man, just do it quick and get it over with!”* so you can move on?

Because I want to talk about this. Because for all of us, we've been bumped once or twice. And then the question really becomes: What do you want to do with that? Do you want to carry it all the way through every experience and every moment and die with it? And just carry the upset and the resentment to the very end? Or are you willing to forgive?

See, tonight I want to talk about two levels of forgiveness. There's the human level of forgiveness, and that's what most of us here talk about, is that how we forgive from a human experience. But there's a whole other level of forgiveness, which I call spiritual forgiveness, which is much deeper. That's not the same.

And sometimes when you talk about spiritual forgiveness to people who want to talk about human forgiveness, you get a ... They want to pop you in the eye! [Congregants laugh] It's like, *“Don't you be taking my forgiveness away from me!”* Right?

So human forgiveness happens any time we've been victimized and we choose to forgive everyone anyway. So can everybody think of at least once in your life where you were victimized? And that's human forgiveness, right?

So why do we do human forgiveness? We do human forgiveness when we get tired of holding onto the pain. We realize that it's not helping make our life in any way better. Sometimes we forgive because we think we should. We notice that the other person's life is a mess and so our heart opens and we forgive them anyway. [Congregants laugh] And sometimes we forgive simply because we don't want to carry into the next life experience.

So human forgiveness goes something like this: You victimize me. Right? Everybody can think of one. You victimize me, and I'm going to be the better, more spiritual person and forgive you for being such a small, sad, little pathetic individual. Right? And that's kind of how it goes, right? From human forgiveness, our ego steps in and says that, even though we've been victimized, I'm going to somehow find it in my graciousness -- in my spiritual depth; in my just ... my outgoingness -- I'm going to forgive you for being such a loser and victimizing me. [Congregants laugh]

Notice that, in human forgiveness, you can be both the victim and have to take no part; no responsibility. There's no growth; there's no wisdom; there's no overcoming; there's no sense of expansion in you or your experience. You're forgiving them simply because you're the better person and you get to feel so superior by forgiving them. Because you know, you are just the better person. [Congregants laugh] Right? So, it makes sense that you would forgive them, because you're so much more spiritually advanced than they are, and they really just deserve your pity. right? So you forgive them, and you get to hold on to your victimhood. Right?

And it's kind of an amazing process: *“I forgive you. I'm still superior, but I still get to feel like a victim, so I get to hold both. I'm superior and still a victim.”* And it's all in one act of forgiveness! *“So, I forgive you anyway. I'm the better person and I let it go.”*

In human forgiveness, you get to be wronged and superior. And I love that! [Congregants laugh] Right? You get to be wronged and superior. You get to feel smaller and better than the other person in the same moment!

So, think of all the people -- if you want to; if you want to play -- that you've forgiven from this point of view. Right? *"Aw, gee; God bless 'em. Like, the little pencil head just didn't know any better!"* [Congregants laugh] Right? And I want you to feel how great that feels! How superior you get to feel when we participate in human forgiveness.

Now, let's look at spiritual forgiveness. And I'm using ... I taught a book; I taught this book recently in a class. And it's Colin Tipping's book on radical forgiveness. And it's an incredible work. And if anything that I say offends you, just go to the book and read a little, right? And then we'll talk about it. But read the book before you confront me, all right? Let's go. So here we go.

When it comes to spiritual forgiveness, there's six things that I'd like you to keep in mind in this process, right?

First of all, that **We are spiritual**. Is that true? That we live ... The human world is a spiritual classroom; that life is our curriculum; our lessons are the events that happen to us in life; and the object of life is to awaken to the truth of who we are and to experience our oneness with God; our oneness with life; our oneness with everyone around it.

Can you say that's true, right? That's one.

Two: When it comes to this life, **we're given complete free will** to live this life experiment in any way we choose and to find our way to oneness and to our home. Is that true? We have complete free will. So that means that you could live your whole life and never forgive anyone for anything. It's your God-given right. You have a God-given right to be as miserable as you want to be. For as long as you want to be cranky and miserable, it is your God-given right.

So, when somebody says to you: *"You want to get happy?"* You say, *"No!"* [Congregants laugh] *"It's my God-given right to be miserable for as long as I want to be miserable."* And they can't say anything about it! Well, they may say something about it ... but you hang on. It is your God-given right.

Three: **Life is not random**. It provides a purposeful unfoldment of the Divine plan with the opportunities to make choices and decisions in every moment guided by our higher self and the Holy Spirit. See, one of the things that I want you to look at in this idea of looking at a spiritual world is: Is it random? Or is it by divine appointment?

Now, in some ways it's easier to look at the world if it's just random. It just happens. But if it's actually governed by Divine Intelligence, then at some level, everything is for your highest good. **Everything that comes to you in your life is for your highest good in one way or another**, whether we ask for it or not! So that, every moment, every situation is there in one way or another to bless you and to take you higher.

And that doesn't mean that it's always easy! Sometimes our greatest lessons, our greatest experiences are those things that are hard and difficult and demand that we dig deep to be a greater, bigger presence than we ever wanted to be. To love in a bigger way. To live in a bigger way. To overcome in a bigger way. And especially when we've been knocked down by life! That life is not random. It's actually providing for your personal spiritual development.

Four: Our bodies and our senses tell us that we are separate, but **we are all one!** We are all individually vibrating as part of a single whole.

Five: To exponentially expand our awareness of oneness, **we agreed to enter this world of duality and experience the exact opposite of oneness – separation.**

And six: Part of this agreement is that **we would forget the world of Oneness that we came from in order to experience the pain of separation.** When we have experienced the pain we agree to in this lifetime, we use spiritual forgiveness to awaken and remember who we are.

So, what I want you to look at today -- what I want you to hold in a very big way -- is: What if everyone and everything that is and will ever happen to you is here to demonstrate what an amazing big light you are for God? What if everything is to help you uncover the full power of God that is within you, so that you can literally know your oneness by overcoming any sense of separation?

That we were actually created in the image and likeness of God. That's a big statement! And so, what if everything that rolls into your life is here to lift you; move you into a higher experience of your oneness with God.

And if everything is here for your highest good, then everybody that comes into your life -- and this is going to give us a kicker -- comes into your life by divine appointment.

That's either the good news or the bad news, right? And it's like, *"No, no, no! was a victim. I was a pure 100 % victim to this person, to this situation. There was no part of this that was from my highest good. There was nothing good in this situation at all! I want to stay a victim and you can't get me off of it!"* Got it. You have a God-given right to stay there as long as you want.

**So, if you are willing to consider this, how do we use spiritual forgiveness?**

First, **we don't deny that we were hurt.** We don't deny the pain. We must feel it to release it. Where are you holding any pain in your mind, your heart, your body? And in the meditation I did this evening, I invited you to feel where you hold the pain in your body and simply open a space and allow the pain to float away; to allow the pain to be released.

And what I want you to see is that you have a way of releasing all pain that is radically easier than you believe. But if you can't feel it, you don't know where it is, and you can't release it. That we actually need to be able to feel the pain so that we can release it. And anytime we release pain from the past, our life gets easier and easier and easier.

So, if you were to just check in with yourself today, is there any place in your body where you're still holding onto pain? And would you be willing to let it go?

Two: **How has this person or situation come to awaken you?** In the situation -- when we're talking about forgiveness -- how is that person or situation come to awaken you? How are they here to help you become more godly; more spiritual; more divine; more created in the image and likeness of God? How have they come to awaken you?

Three: **What – if any -- was the good in that situation?** Is there anything that was good in that situation? How has any part of this situation blessed me? In spiritual forgiveness, we must be willing to look in and find the blessing before we release the situation. So in that situation -- whatever it was -- can you see anything that's good? Has there been any way that you become a greater, stronger, better person for having undergone that situation?

Four: In spiritual forgiveness, **you can forgive the other person and actually thank them for coming into your life to teach you that experience.**

*“Richard, I was with you ‘til right here! I was willing to go all the way from one, two, three, four ... but this idea four -- that I could actually thank somebody for coming into my life and teaching me a lesson that I don't want -- that's a bridge too far.”*

True! But we can forgive them and still thank them, because sometimes my greatest teachers -- I didn't want that lesson. I didn't like it. It hurt. They were mean. And the idea that I could actually forgive somebody and thank them? For teaching me in a way that cruel, mean, unforgiving? Took me to my edge?

And I realized that, because they were the way they are, I became the man that I am. And if you've been through painful moments thanking someone that was mean to you, it's a huge step. This is not something that happens lightly or easily! This is something where we have to really take it to the mat! *“Thank you for helping me become the man I am today, and having blessed all the people that I blessed because I had to overcome you.”* That's a huge thing! That's no small thing: to say to another soul, *“I didn't like it, but thank you for doing it anyway. Thank you for fulfilling your part of the spiritual covenant that we had, because you prepared me in a way that no other person could.”*

Five: **spiritual forgiveness requires that we also be willing to forgive ourselves for any part in a situation that we played.** Any part! Anything that you've done to be a part of this situation, I forgive myself for adding to that situation.

And six – and I think maybe this is maybe the most important. That in spiritual forgiveness, **we can ask to learn in softer and easier ways than we have before.** We can ask ... Instead, we can ask to learn through grace and ease instead of pain and suffering.

Now, I was going to ask: How many of you can see a place in your life where you learn through pain and suffering? Like, there's a part of us spiritually where we believe that somehow pain and suffering is a better teacher than grace and ease. And if we really do this spiritual forgiveness process, when we get to this last step -- step number six -- we can actually look at the world around us and say, *“You know, I don't want to learn anymore through pain and suffering. I don't need to learn the hard way. I'm willing to learn with love and joy.”*

And I have found that love and joy is actually sometimes a far better teacher than pain and suffering. But then as I go through this process of really, truly spiritually forgiving ... and clearing the deck and letting go of those things ... and allowing all those people I have held that have harmed me or done me wrong or victimized me ... As I have gone through this process of my own life and released them and forgiven them and thanked them for all the ways that they've impacted my soul. Because they have! And I am the man I am today because of every little and big thing that I had to overcome. And I know myself; I know what I'm capable of.

And yet, I also know that I don't need to learn that way any longer. That I can actually learn with grace and ease. And that love and gentleness are actually much more enjoyable teachers.

And that as we go through this process over and over again, I want to challenge you that -- in the places where you want to move into human forgiveness and take on a superior place -- I want you to go a little deeper, and to really look at these steps and say: *“Where can I practice spiritual forgiveness? Where can I become greater because of this situation? And I forgive myself, and I forgive you; and I'm ready to live a better life.”*

Will you pray with me?

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That there is but one Presence and one Power: God, the good. And today we thank everyone -- thank everyone -- who has

helped create us as the people we are today. For all the lessons that were hard; for all the lessons that were easy. And we acknowledge the gifts that each brought to our life. We forgive them and we thank them for they played a role in awakening our soul. They taught us and we learned from them, and we are no longer who we once were.

So in all things -- in all things -- we look to God. And in all things, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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