



WORKTALK WEEKLY

27 APRIL 2009

This is the fifth piece in a mini series on daily disciplines (DD)

DD 5 - Seventy times seven

What I am about to say to you could easily be read as trivializing a very serious and profound subject. The reason I am taking this risk is because I am writing a weekly piece rather than a whole book but I want to communicate a book load of truth to you, if I get it wrong you may have to forgive me.

Which is what I want to talk to you about. Right at the heart of the Lords Prayer - which was clearly designed as a daily prayer (emerging from the daily bread slice) there is a section on forgiveness. You don't need me to tell you that forgiveness is at the heart, not just of the prayer, but the whole Christian message. Becoming a Christian requires forgiveness, living as a Christian requires forgiveness and dying well requires forgiveness.

I am suggesting to you that forgiveness is a key stress management skill because stress and anger and frustration are so closely linked that forgiveness is needed to break the chains.

In the end there are only three dynamics where you will need to practise forgiveness. To yourself, your fellow humans and your God. If you retain anger in any of these relationships you will suffer and so will others. You will be more stressed and less effective.

Right now you may be angry at yourself and feel you have let yourself down, missed a standard or not achieved what you should. You may be frustrated by a mistake.

Simultaneously you may be carrying anger towards a colleague, employer, client, supplier, advisor or employee. You may be mad at a parent, lover, partner, sibling or cousin. In fact any family member. You may be cross with a friend, stranger, the local politician, your banker or an individual in front of you in a line.

You may be mad at God for what you think He has done or has not done in your life or the lives of others. However illogical it may seem, you might be cross that God has made a decision with which you disagree.

"Forgive us our sins (debts) as we forgive those who have sinned against us (our debtors)" now comes into play as a powerful discipline.

As usual we could miss the power and the point which, although not unforgivable, would be unfortunate. The point is that this needs to be a daily discipline. Let me explain.

You will keep messing up (sinning) and so will everyone else. You and I will need to forgive ourselves and others every day for the rest of our lives. But only one day at a time. You may have to come again to something you thought you'd dealt with yesterday - that's ok - deal with it again today without beating yourself up about it. But only today.

You have no idea how you will be tomorrow (or for that matter whether you will be tomorrow) so you only have to take responsibility for today. Forgive today - forget yesterday - and meet tomorrow when it comes.

Some people will be repeat offenders in your life and you will need to be a repeat forgiver (you may also take other actions such as avoiding or challenging them).

Some historical aspects of your life may keep returning to you and require another dose of daily forgiveness.

Some matters are so big that it takes day after day after day for you to keep inching towards deeper forgiveness.

Like financial debt, sin can take time to wipe out. On a daily basis it is possible to be debt free knowing that there is nothing more you can do today about it.

There is an underlying truth which is also worth remembering. God has declared you debt free as far as He is concerned. The cross has cleared your accounts. You can only be forgiving because you have been forgiven. The bible makes it very clear that your debts are wiped out when you become a Christian. It also makes it clear that becoming a Christian is like being adopted or married. Its one thing to be declared legally adopted or married, it's another to live it out on a daily basis. So forgiveness has a once for all and a daily dimension to it.

Forgive me today if I've not made all this clear.

Work Well
Geoff Shattock

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BIBLE SECTION

Matthew 6:9-12

9“This, then, is how you should pray: ” ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
10your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11Give us today our daily bread. 12Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

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