



Life Repair: Forgiveness and Healing of Relationships

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The crushed reed Yahweh will not break, nor the smouldering wick snuff out. (Yahweh) will faithfully bring forth justice. Isaiah 42:3

Such is God's compassion for us. Not just some of us. All of us. How hard it is for us always to do the same. To believe, perhaps, when hurt goes deep, that forgiveness is due the one who has hurt us. Or to be closed to our part in the conflict. If we are fortunate, we learn to resolve conflicts early. Relationship without conflict from time to time is not possible. Nor can we be truly intimate unless we can recognise and acknowledge when someone has caused us pain, know the pain we cause others and feel pain because of it. We do not become a wise elder without this learning over time. The later years will become increasingly bitter and fractious. Forgiveness is an essential quality of relational wisdom.

The pattern of Jesus' life was that of whole-making and healing. God's call to us too is to be whole-makers and healers in this amazing and beautiful cosmos, that "draws its breath from the hope of reconciliation" (Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ*, p.91). Withholding forgiveness splits and separates rather than unifies us. "There is no healing or reconciling, however, without suffering and death" (Delio, p.92). Letting go and dying to self through reconciliation is a means of transformation, a beginning, not an end, with potential for even deeper intimacy and understanding between us.

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger," we read in Ephesians 4:26. Sometimes, though, we do need a pause before we can face the other compassionately, but let it not be drawn out or permanent. We know that held onto, anger and resentment can cause all kinds of problems with body, mind and spirit. In the best sense of the words, "it is for my own good" to forgive, regardless of the other's capacity to respond. "Toxic" and dangerous relationships, though, are not for our good. Forgiveness without justice may not be possible for us. In this case we first take care of our safety and leave forgiveness to God.

An Exercise in Consciousness of your Capacity for Forgiveness

- *I shall know I have truly forgiven you when I have stopped thinking and talking about it with you or anyone else; I embrace the opportunity to deepen my compassion, my understanding and, where possible, my personal relationship with you.*

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