

Outreach Posters

October 2010

I know a man who found out that his wife was cheating on him for years. Another man told me about being molested as a child.

As a Christian minister I can say without doubt that 'forgiveness' is the most explosive and difficult topic of all. It's not hard to work out why. So many people have been wronged. And sometimes they tell me the messy details. Which can make me weep. Or get really angry.

It might surprise you that I think anger is right. However the Bible agrees. 'Be angry' it tells us '... but don't let the sun go down on your anger'. In other words, anger must have an end. It's never justifiable to 'maintain the rage'.

So how can anger be right? Because the murderer, the rapist, the betrayer, the swindler, the molester, the drunk driver... they've all done evil things. And it's right to be angry at both the evil and the perpetrator of evil.

But anger is no place to find rest. Even though it's incredibly hard, Jesus wants us to move on and find forgiveness in our hearts. Letting go of anger and bitterness is a real struggle and you may need to keep working on it all your life.

Jesus came to make it possible for anyone to receive forgiveness. He knows that forgiveness is what we need most of all. So I mustn't withhold forgiveness from others when he's offering it to me. That's a double standard.



Here's how Jesus taught us to pray in the famous 'Lord's Prayer' from Matthew's gospel:

Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Notice that we need to forgive in the same way God has forgiven us. Since this is so hard and we really, really don't want to do it, Jesus rams the point home. Straight after the prayer He says:

For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins.

The only way forward is, as the Bible says: to '*forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you*'.

So 'Who do you need to forgive?' Start working on it now.

Prayer: *Father please give me the strength to forgive. It's so hard I really need your help. Amen.*