

Forgiveness

INTRO: How can we repair broken relationships?
How can we change past experiences, especially those in which we have been wronged?

FORGIVENESS is a basic life skill, and a universal need

- we all find ourselves either in need of being forgiven, or of needing to forgive at some point
- many people object to the idea of forgiveness because of some misconceptions

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

- (1) forgiveness is not excusing a person's bad behavior
- (2) forgiveness is not passive acceptance
EX: "peace at any cost"
- (3) forgiveness is not self-blame EX: "it was really my fault"
- (4) forgiveness is not necessarily associated with remorse or repentance on the part of "them"
- (5) forgiveness is not necessarily associated with reconciliation; you may not want to reconcile

- (6) forgiveness is not based on justice, but on mercy; if people deserved forgiveness, they would not need forgiveness

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWS

There are various views on forgiveness

- (1) some secular psychologists see forgiveness as insulting or demeaning to the offended party
- (2) some see forgiveness as therapeutically beneficial, not necessarily a religious practice
- (3) some see forgiveness as part of their Christian duty

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Christian theological perspective of forgiveness begins with an understanding of the pervasiveness of sin in humanity EX: doctrine of total depravity

- all humans are essentially self-seeking; all are equally fallible; all are equally in need of forgiveness; all are equally undeserving

(Rom 3:23) " All have sinned.. fallen short..."

Viewed from this perspective, forgiveness becomes an empathic response to shared human weakness

(Eph. 4:32) " Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

(Gal. 6:1-2) " Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently...watch yourself, or you also may be tempted... Carry each other's burdens...fulfill the Law of Christ."

- to refuse to forgive is to put oneself in a position of moral superiority
- psychologically, takes a lot of energy to maintain that position