

## **FORGIVENESS 2**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We have been considering forgiveness. Our family is involved in a nasty court case over my parent's estate and it has prompted me to really analyse just what forgiveness involves and how to live it.

But we are confronted with issues every day in every area of our life so understanding forgiveness and living it can be an essential life skill.

Last time we looked at forgiveness from several angles.

### **BOUNDARIES**

We saw that human society cannot exist without "rules" which are really just boundaries set up to protect as many people as possible. These include road rules, Codes of Practice, policy statements, table manners, teenage curfews, World Rugby Rule Book, Geneva Conventions.

"Punishments" are inflicted in an attempt to "encourage" people not to sin and these range from a "naughty corner", yellow card to execution.

### **SIN**

We looked at the concept that sin is not just breaking the Big 10. Sin, in its broader sense is inflicting hurt on another person however that happens. Anything that is "wrong" in our world causes pain, like a cut finger. Pain tells us that something is not right. But forgiveness is most needed for the emotional hurt that accompanies a wrong.

### **BIG 10**

God knew this when He set up the world and He made all sorts of "laws" as guidelines but the most important ones are the Big 10. Every one of these causes deep pain to the sinnee.

We started with the Commandments that apply to our human relationships, like honour of parents, murder, adultery, theft, and I think these are listed in order of importance. Our parents mould us to not do the others and should be our primary respect.

Covertness, which is wanting what someone else has, hurts **you** most and often leads to the others of the Big 10.

And the first 4 tell us how to get on with God. Put God first, no idols, especially money etc, respect His Name because this represents His power and respect the time He sets apart to hang with us, The Sabbath. If this relationship

is not right, it just so much harder to make the others happen and we have our lives upside down.

## **JESUS**

Forgiveness is incredibly hard for us humans to do, SO Jesus came to do it for us and to show us how.

He came to

- reveal His Father, the Eternal to us as a loving person, not a dictator in the sky waiting to zap us.
- To show us how much like God we are, well can be.
- To give us a living example of how humans CAN live in love and righteousness
- And most importantly, He died to pay the price for all the hurt and “sin”, not just the Big 10, but all the petty ones. we ALL have inflicted on others (and even ourselves). This is a major theological concept that we won't go into now.

He gave us an example of what forgiveness could be but he sure didn't put up with unacceptable behaviour and called it what it was, even to the point of taking a whip to people profaning His Father's temple. He showed forgiveness and exonerations to all who would accept it

## **BIBLICAL EXAMPLES**

The Bible is written as a human book. It is about people and they all sinned and were sinned against. The great stories show the different ways that ordinary people dealt with the hurts from sin. We saw so clearly that some ways worked and others didn't. It is the same for us today, which is one of the great things about the Bible in that it is just as relevant to us today as it was to Moses.

## **LEVELS OF FORGIVENESS**

We saw that forgiveness was not is simple thing and there can be many levels and pathways to it.

The ultimate goal would be to be friends again and continue a positive relationship of some sort. We can also accept different levels of reconciliation in order to manage day to day activities, but the important outcome is that we can no longer hold negative emotions concerning the person or the issue in question, can genuinely wish the other party well, or at least stop “caring” and move on in peace.

This may involve never seeing them again or barbies on the weekend or restored families.

### **FORGIVENESS IS NOT ABOUT THEM**

Strange as it may seem, forgiveness is not based on what the other person is/does/says/ thinks or their honesty or integrity. It is based on what I am. The object is for us to open the door to peace. If we do that, we will find inner peace.

What the other person does, is really up to them and what happens to them is their problem. We are both facing the choice to live in love and harmony or negativity and stress.

But the most important thing is we need to forgive on some level, for our own sakes in order to have personal peace about the issue.

### **REPENTANCE**

Some say you don't have to forgive unless they repent. It is true that repentance makes an enormous difference to our ability to forgive, but repentance is the highest form of a cascade of actions. Regret occurs when we are upset because a sin on our part has affected us badly and we need to suck it up by acknowledging that we have stuffed it up, in order to keep going.

Remorse is when we are sorry that we have hurt someone else but have heaps of excuses. There is always a **but**.

True repentance is when we acknowledge our sin and try to make amends.

Regret and remorse are better than nothing but true repentance opens the door to reconciliation.

### **RELEASE**

If the other person chooses not to repent, then we do have tools to help us deal with the issue. Continuing negativity about the other person's sin only affects us and our health and OUR life will suffer. We can choose to move on and let the other person go.

Exoneration is when there is a valid reason why the sin has occurred like a child or dementia or total ignorance.

Forbearance is when you suck it up, but do so in a negative way so that, superficially, all seems well.

Release is where you choose to walk away, either physically or emotionally. Obviously, the relationship is never the same but you can work with them and keep the peace. You can go on working/living with them, if you have to, but it is so hard especially if they carry the conflict on.

Reconciliation is the highest goal which is where there is total restoration of the relationship, albeit on a difference level, but forgiveness can lead to a greater closeness than ever.

### **TO ERR IS HUMAN**

To quote Alexander Pope (not The Pope) “to err is human”. We all sin all the time, often unintentionally, but we do. We hurt others in the wider sense of the word.

But Pope goes on “to forgive is divine”. God forgave and forgave His people over and over. Jesus came to earth to make this forgiveness possible if we choose to accept His sacrifice. But more than dying for us, He gave us an example to show that man can act in a divine way and forgive.

We can follow HIM and do it, if we choose.

### **WORLDLY SOLUTIONS**

Today we are going to look at some of the worldly solutions.

Now humans are innovative and have developed many ways to deal with this issue of hurt, conflict and the stress it engenders.

But I need to tell you that God was there long before humans developed any of these systems.

### **COURTS**

Obviously, litigation in court is used to tease out just who is more likely to be at fault and some form of resolution arrived at. This can range from putting the sinning party to death to dismissal with both parties paying their own costs. This system is totally at the mercy of human frailty and can be most unsatisfactory but it does bring about some level of resolution. Often the offended need more than a court ruling to feel OK, but it can lead to some solution.

Most people forget that OUR legal system, based on innocence until proved guilty, was originally based on the Biblical system. Is still is, to some extent, but human frailties or pure bloody mindedness have distorted it to a large extent where, now, good is called evil and evil good.

**Isa 5:20** Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

**Isa 5:21** Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

## JUDGES

Now God set up a system of judges way back at the time of Exodus, several thousand years before Christ was born.

In Exodus, Moses was doing all the mediation and judging himself because he, alone, was in touch with God. As with all law, his decisions became part of the rules and conventions used in their society as this saves time and similar matters can be dealt with in lower courts under precedent.

It was just too much for one man, so God, through his uncle Laban suggested

**Exo 18:13** And on the next day it happened that Moses sat to judge the people. And the people stood by Moses from the morning to the evening.

**Exo 18:14** And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What *is* this thing which you do to the people? Why do you sit alone by yourself, and all the people stand by you from morning to evening?

**Exo 18:15** And Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

**Exo 18:16** When they have a matter, they come to me. And I judge between one and another, and I make known the statutes of God and His Laws.

**Exo 18:17** And Moses' father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do *is* not good.

**Exo 18:18** You will surely wear away, both you and this people that *is* with you. For this thing *is* too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it alone.

**Exo 18:19** Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you. You be for the people toward God, that you may bring the causes to God.

**Exo 18:20** And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall make them know the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do.

**Exo 18:21** And you shall look out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain. And place *such* over them to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

**Exo 18:22** And let them judge the people at all times. And it shall be, every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge. And make it easier for yourself, and they shall bear with you.

Moses took on the really hard cases like a higher court.

## LEVELS OF JUSTICE

In our situations, there are levels of injustice from being cut off in traffic to murder and God set up processes to deal with the equivalent thing, way back then and set appropriate “punishment” for the times.

**Num 35:16** And if he strikes him with an instrument of iron, so that he dies, he *is* a murderer. The murderer shall surely be put to death.

But, if there is no doubt he intended to kill the victim, there was no outcome other than execution but if the case was manslaughter, there was a strange system involving Cities of Refuge but we won't go there.

The penalties for all crimes or misdemeanours were set out clearly and seem very harsh by our standards

## JURY

Neither is the jury system anything new.

**Num 35:22** But if he thrusts him suddenly without hatred, or has thrown something on him without lying in wait,

**Num 35:23** or with any stone with which a man may die if he does not see, and throws *it* upon him so that he dies, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm,

**Num 35:24** then the congregation shall judge between the one who kills and the revenger of blood (the executioner) according to these judgments.

If there is any doubt, a jury decides.

## MEDIATION

And we pride ourselves in this new-fangled concept of making people go to mediation in an attempt to avoid the time and cost of litigation and bring the matter to a conclusion as soon as possible.

But God had this set up way back when.

Deu 17:8 If a matter *is* too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, matters of strife within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which Jehovah your God shall choose.

Deu 17:9 And *you* shall come to the priests of the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days, and ask. And they shall declare to you the sentence of judgment.

Deu 17:10 And you shall do according to the sentence which they declare to you from that place which Jehovah shall choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they tell you.

**Deu 17:11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand or the left.**

But if you breach the order, you end up in a higher court.

**Deu 17:12** And the who man that acts proudly and will not listen to the priest who stands to minister there before Jehovah your God, or to the judge, even that man shall die. And you shall put away the evil from Israel.

They had to attend mediation before they went to court. But if you defied them, it was curtains.

## COUNSELLING

Again, a smart newfangled thing thought up in recent times but there is nothing new under the sun.

The story of Job and his friends in his time of trouble is a classic case of counselling. We find this in the guts of the book of Job and is long and tedious reading on the whole, with some gems amazing of wisdom at the end when God intervenes. His three friends talked with him for ages, teasing out why he was suffering so. Their advice was pretty average, as is most advice from counsellors, but it did help Job to work through his issue with his protagonist, in this case God.

Eventually God intervened and put Job in his place and told him to stop wallowing in self-pity and look around him and see the power of God and let God sort it for him.

Here, we have some of the most powerful and beautiful words in the world which people quote all the time but have no idea where they came from. Job

found peace and was able to move on, once he got things into perspective and factored God into the picture. This is a vital point. If we don't include God, then we are missing the most important factor and our outcome cannot be the best it could be.

The situation had not changed but Job's thinking had.

### **VICTIM CONFRONTATION -RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

Restorative justice is a new concept in our court system and it views crime as more than breaking the law. It acknowledges that sin.... Crime... causes harm to people, relationships, and the community. Ummmm that is why the action was defined as a crime or sin in the first place

A growing number of jurisdictions are giving offenders and victims a chance to meet each other. The victim tells of the impact on them of the actions of the perpetrator and often this is all the victim needs to obtain some release,

In turn, the perpetrator is actually confronted by the effect of his actions on a real person, not an object or a nebulous nothing, and gets the opportunity to apologise. He can also give his reasons for the action which can bring some understanding to the victim. This process results in perpetrators being often less likely to "sin" again.

Often, these meetings lead to transformational changes in both parties' lives as the victims are able to forgive and move on and some systems go even further, giving crime victims a say in the offenders' punishment, without it ever needing to go to trial.

But Jesus was onto this way back when.

*Mat 18:15 And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.  
Mat 18:16 But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.  
Mat 18:17 And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.*

Another aspect of this is restitution. Returning stolen property. How one grieves for special things that are stolen, an engagement ring, heirloom earrings, father's cufflinks, a broken clock.

In God's system, people are held responsible for their actions and restitution is expected.

**Exo 22:1** If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

Exo 22:2 If a thief is found breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, no blood *shall be* shed for him.

Exo 22:3 If the sun is risen upon him, blood is due for him. He should repay in full. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

Exo 22:4 If the theft is certainly found in his hand alive, whether it is an ox, or an ass, or a sheep, he shall restore double.

Exo 22:5 If a man causes a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his animal, and shall feed in another man's field; he shall repay from the best of his own field, and the best of his own vineyard.

Exo 22:6 If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that the stacks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field, is burned up, he who kindled the fire shall surely repay in full.

So, people are confronted with their “sins” and can make restitution and apologise. Examples are cleaning up the graffiti, compensation for hurt. Community Service is an attempt at this.

And we need to be aware of our actions too. If we use this process in our own thinking, imagining how it would be if you had to face up to the “sinnee”, I know I think twice about doing the sin or saying something negative if I had to front the person themselves. The sin becomes against a person, not just an action or thing.

And we need to consider if we should reach out to people we have hurt. There is a real place for telling those you gossiped to that you were wrong, reimbursing that cheated overtime, putting back the biscuits you “pinched” from the staff fridge with someone else's name on it.

But this is all old hat to God who thought this up thousands of years ago,

Sometimes the admission of guilt or the acknowledgment of wrong-doing is all that is needed. A simple wave from someone who has cut off in traffic can be all that it takes to appease your wrath. A mother may only need a son to acknowledge that he ripped her off, to restore him to a will. She probably won't worry about the money he misappropriated. She only wants the relationship restored and the sin righted.

An apology from a murderer can go a long way to giving the family peace. None of this gives back the person or the money or the place in the queue to get on to the M-I, but somehow it brings some peace.

### **BIBLICAL SOLUTION**

The Bible has an interesting concept which we don't use but maybe we should.

#### **CAST THE FIRST STONE**

For someone to be accused of a "sin", there has to be at least two eye witnesses.

**Deu 17:6** At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

We do this, too, but our witnesses can include DNA, CCT etc.

But God takes it a bit further. On conviction, the witnesses must "cast the first stone". Revolting concept to us to stone someone to death, but practices were different. It is the concept we are looking at.

**Deu 17:7** The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So thou shalt put away the evil from the midst of thee.

This puts enormous pressure on those bringing the complaint to tell the truth. You are confronted with the reality of the situation. If the person is genuinely guilty, then there will be a level of closure for the victims and it would certainly reduce false accusations as two people have to actually get involved in the horrible process. Then the whole community takes part in the execution and so also takes responsibility for the process. Totally revolting but a great system. The deterrent effect is mind boggling. Obviously, there can be abuses but humans are humans wherever and whenever.

In our systems today, people can bring complaints and remain anonymous, While this gives protection in cases such as molestation, in other cases it can put a totally distorted perspective on things... People can be accused of all sorts of stuff and have no right of reply, certainly no restorative justice. Oh, to be God and be able to see through all of this.

#### **EYE FOR AN EYE**

**Exo 21:23** And if *any* injury occurs, then you shall give life for life,  
**Exo 21:24** eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

Exo 21:25 burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

**Oba 1:15** For the day of Jehovah *is* near on all the nations; as you have done, it shall be done to you. Your reward shall return upon your head.

This verse is quoted so often to show how cruel and vindictive the Judaeo-Christian God is. But, but they miss the whole point. The concept is designed to make sure that the punishment matches the hurt from the crime and no more. In the past, the legal system was appalling in the severity of the punishments like transportation for life for a starving kid stealing a loaf of bread. Today you serve no time in gaol for killing an innocent person with a deliberate unprovoked punch in the street.

This concept helps us get hurts into perspective.

When we are dealing with the hurts or perceived injustice (same thing) of a “sin”, we can really do well to sit back and consider just how savage the “sin” really is and make sure we are not over-reacting. When we are seething with rage at the traffic lights, screaming abuse, waving a tall-man finger, putting our blood pressure through the top of our head and destroying epithelial cells in our stomach, we do well to think “Oh well. It was ten seconds in my day. That is a whole 0.0155% of my day.

By the same token, we tend to think now, that a convicted drug runner should be feted at the airport and be paid millions of dollars for her “story” or a son who has deceived his parents, stolen from them, plotted against them, removed himself and his family from them and refused to honour them, is entitled an “equal share” of what was left of their lives.

An eye for an eye helps us to get things into perspective and move on to peace.

## **RAPE**

And while we are at it, there is another concept in the Bible which we have completely forgotten but shows so much justice.

In the situation of rape, we find this concept

Deu 22:23 If a girl *who is* a virgin is engaged to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her,

Deu 22:24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them with stones that they die; the girl because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he has humbled his neighbour's wife. So, you shall put away evil from among you.

Basically, if a woman says that she has been raped and she is in a place where she could have yelled out and been rescued, remember they were living in very close quarters to each other, it can, then, be assumed that she gave the bloke encouragement and so was complicit. We have had cases where a woman has obviously consented a chain of guys, then changed her mind half way through and then cries rape at number 6. The poor bloke has been goaled.

But

Deu 22:25 But if a man finds an engaged girl in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man that lay with her shall die.  
Deu 22:26 But you shall do nothing to the girl. No sin *worthy of death* is in the girl; for as when a man rises against his neighbour and slays him, even so is this matter.  
Deu 22:27 For he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but *there was none to save her.*

Obviously, the detail differs in our society but the principle is valid. If the sinnee has contributed to, or could have changed the outcome, but chooses not to, then they must bear some of the responsibility for the conflict.

This concept again shows how wise the Bible is and that there is nothing new under the sun.

**Ecc 1:9** That which has been *is* that which shall be; and that which has been done *is* that which shall be done; and *there is* nothing new under the sun.

### **PRODIGAL SON**

And, of course, the definitive Biblical statement on forgiveness is Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son.

Now, we all know the story and can probably quote the KJ version verbatim, and we have heard more sermons on it, than we have had hot dinners. The summary is that the younger son (The Grub) duds the father by asking for his share of the estate long before the old man dies

He then and takes off, blows all the money on partying, sinks to the pits and eventually comes back. Amazingly, the Dad forgives him and restores him to the family. The older brother is not impressed!!!!

In our family, the son did not come back but we know that, had he done so, Dad would have forgiven him.

## **GIMME GIMME**

Let's look at this story, There is so much in here to think about and the concept of forgiveness shown here is quite confronting. Well, it is to me.

The story appears in [Luke 15:11-32](#)

**Luk 15:11** And He said, A certain man had two sons.

**Luk 15:12** And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that is coming *to me*.

What is happening here is that “The Grub”, is actually saying that he wants father dead. His own way of living was more important to him than the wellbeing of his father, and consequently the rest of the family.

What selfish, disrespectful appalling behaviour, even by the standards of this society.

This act encompasses so many aspects of human hurt, of human sin: lack of respect for the position of the father, lack of respect for another human, lack of consideration as to how the father and the brother and indeed the family and the estate and employees were to cope with half the capital of the estate gone. One assumes this would have involved the necessity for the father to borrow money to keep the estate going until it could recover from the loss of capital, if it ever did before the father died, if at all. In these times if a debt was not repaid in the 7 years allowed by the law, then the debtor (the father or maybe the elder brother) was indentured to the lender until the debt was worked out, ie slave labour.

This is not small stuff we are cutting here. This gross selfishness also involves a lack of respect for the laws and the culture of the society and basic human integrity. There was no social security then. Debt could amount to homelessness.

Disrespect and deliberate intent to take down your father is bigtime sin. This is why “Honour your father and mother” is one of the Big 10 and the first involving our human relationships.

Now, according to the law of those times, the parents were entitled to take a sinful or rebellious the son to the elders, who were the law keepers, and have him put to death.

**Deu 21:18** If a man has a son who is stubborn and rebels, who will not obey his father's voice or his mother's voice, even when they have chastened him *he* will not listen to them,

**Deu 21:19** then his father and his mother shall lay hold on him and bring him out to the elders of his city, and to the gate of his place.

**Deu 21:20** And they shall say to the elders of his city, this son of ours *is* stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice. *He is* a glutton and a drunkard.

**Deu 21:21** And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones so that he dies. So shall you put evil away from you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

Obviously, this would be the end of a very long path of trying to salvage him but the facility was there

But more than all this, it is an affront to love. Families are supposed to love one another and cover each other's backs. We may not always like our siblings or relatives, but deep down we love them. That is why sin hurts so much within families.

But, then, on a much higher level, he had angered and hurt God who is his Heavenly Father. Our earthly fathers actually represent God on earth. The father of the family is supposed to act in the same way our Heavenly Father acts with us, upholding righteous and nurturing, as this protects everyone, but doing it in love. This is another reason why Honour your Father etc is part of the Big 10, the first commandment that tells us how to get on with other people. If you can't manage to get it right in the family, your chances are pretty slim outside.

## **FATHER'S ACTIONS**

So Dad

*And he divided his living to them.*

We don't know why, maybe The Grub nagged and badgered him or was cheating him until the old man gave in but the father would have had to go into debt or sell land to raise the cash.

Maybe the Dad was pleased to be rid of him. This kid was a real mongrel. No one can deny that and I think he didn't get that way overnight.

It also sounds as if he gave the other share to the eldest son then. This adds another layer of complexity to the story.

### **ELDER BROTHER**

We are not told how the elder son reacted but I am quite sure he was not over the moon. The brunt of the hard work would have fallen on him, as indeed it probably had all along, and made his life soooo much harder. His pain would have involved resentment which is quite understandable and it would have been very hard for him not to resent the father as well. If the wheels fell off, it would be him who went into servitude.

But I don't think this would have come out of the blue. There was probably a long history of this lad goofing off and the Dad trying to guide him, to no avail. Maybe there had been other incidents where the Dad bailed him out. We don't know but it is not hard to imagine.

In the meantime, the elder brother works away diligently keeping the place running, doing the right thing, silently watching The Grub wreck his parents' life

### **AND OFF HE GOES**

Luk 15:13 And not many days afterward, the younger son gathered all together and went away into a far country.

So, The Grub nicks off and actually removes the capital and goods from the estate so the father and brother do not have access to it.

And then he blew it all. What a surprise!!

And there he wasted his property, living dissolutely.

But Karma and justice is a bitch and

Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land. And he began to be in want.

Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country. And he sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

There is a great sermon about how low he has fallen and the symbolism therein, as pig are the ultimate unclean animal to the Jews and the whole concept is

totally disgusting to them, worse than if he had had to clean out cess pits. He was really at rock bottom.

The sermons would go on to tell us how Jesus can save us from our sins which He sees as low and as dirty as that, because sin is sin in terms of separating us from God. He sees that even our good deeds are as dirty rags (It actually says menstrual rags), especially in our society

**Isa 64:6** All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy rag; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind, our iniquities sweep us away.

So

**Luk 15:16** And he was longing to fill his belly with the husks that the pigs ate, and no one gave to him.

Interestingly, he still kept the dietary laws of the Bible and couldn't eat the husks that the pigs had touched, nor would he steal from strangers.

**Luk 15:17** And when he came to himself, (we would say woke up to himself) he said, How many hired servants of my father abound on loaves, and I perish with hunger!

He has no concept that the estate may not have recovered!!!

**Luk 15:18** I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you

He acknowledged he had sinned against God first and then his father. Good start.

**Luk 15:19** and am no more worthy to be called your son.

He realised and acknowledged the depth of his sin even as far as God. This is true repentance.... assuming he meant it. Tradition always assumes that he did mean it but when I think about it now, we don't really know his motives. It may just have been regret at his own mess and just wanted to get back to the comforts of him. He may have been just expressing remorse in that he was sorry for the damage and hurt he had caused to the father and, maybe the estate. But we can always find a reason to blame others for our stuff-ups.

**Make me like one of your hired servants.**

This fact that he asked to be taken on a hired servant makes one think that the tradition got it right and he was truly repentant.

Luk 15:20 And he arose and came to his father.

## HOME COMING

And what about the father?

Don't you think he would have grieved every day that The Grub was gone, was such a dropout, was such a failure, was such a louse, had ripped him off and duded him.... that he was gone. Did the old man blame himself for all of this? I probably would have.

No matter how much your kids don't fit the mould, you love them. You may not like them, or how they behave, but you love them.

But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion,

Now remember, this was long before the father knew of his repentance. The boy was a long way off and the Dad couldn't see his clothes or his face, just his GISS (Birdwatching term: General Impression, size and shape). He would have known that person anywhere!!!!

and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

He had forgiven him. His love overruled his hurt. His forgiveness involved no link with repentance or even remorse and regret.

But, then, we do have the repentance.

Luk 15:21 And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son.

Not the grudging acknowledgement of regret, not the butts of remorse, just total acknowledgment of his contribution to the conflict.

## RECONCILIATION

We are not told of tears, or hugs, or handshakes or back slapping. Dad just accepts him back and puts the situation right as befits a son of the family.

I don't know if The Grub had had a bath but I think not, so he only had his filthy rags to wear. There is that sermon aabout filthy rags, showing how they

represent how God sees us in our sin, how Jesus's sacrifice allows our sins to be forgiven and washed away and the robe of righteousness placed on our shoulders instead.

The first level of acceptance was the worldly level, the clothes, the outer garments.

**Luk 15:22** But the father said to his servants, Bring the best robe and put it on him.

Then

**And put a ring on his hand**

The ring is the symbol of acceptance into the family and bore the family insignia, just the same as we are entitled to be part of our Heavenly Father's family.

**and shoes on his feet.**

The shoes help to protect his feet as he goes from this point of repentance on his new journey.

Then the relationship with God

**Luk 15:23** And bring the fattened calf here and kill it.

The fatted calf was kept especially for the Peace Offering at the temple. The kid's sins had to be atoned for, for him to be accepted by the society. The calf had to be perfect in shape etc, not some dud animal or stud animal, and, after the sacrifice and the priests got their bit, the rest was for the family and had to be eaten in three days, hence the BIG party

The link to a Peace Offering and reconciliation is obvious. The Peace Offering shows our reconciliation with God.

**Luk 15:24** for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.

Just the same as happens when one sinner repents.

**Luk 15:4** "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. He leaves the ninety-nine in the wilderness and looks for the one that is lost until he finds it, doesn't he?"

Luk 15:5 When he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders and rejoices.  
Luk 15:6 Then he goes home, calls his friends and neighbours together, and says to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I've found my lost sheep!'  
Luk 15:7 In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't need to repent."

Then the party!!!!

And let us eat and be merry,

And the father spared no expense and they had a ball.

But it was the elder brother's share that was used, without his permission mind you, to welcome back this twit.

But to the father, the son was more important to him than the money.

ELDER BROTHER

But!!!

Luk 15:25 And his elder son was in the field. And as he came and drew near the house, he heard music and dancing.

Luk 15:26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

Luk 15:27 And he said to him, Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him safe and sound.

Luk 15:28 And he was angry and would not go in.

Can't say I blame him. He had been left out after all his hard work and loyalty. They were using HIS money. They hadn't bother to let him know. How hard would it have been to send one of those servants who was stuffing his face with HIS meat, to come and get him? Mind you, if he had been right out in the hills with the flock, they may not have known where he was

And his father!!!! After all that The Grub had done to him. EB (elder brother) had had to sit and listen to him cry in his beer over the mongrel who had duded him all his life, EB had had to organise the loan AND meet the payments. EB had worked day and night, fingers to the bone with not one word of thanks in the whole time!!!!

He forgot that he would inherit the estate, that his hard work went to building up his assets etc. But the positives are hard to remember in the midst of hurt.

But the biggest thing was that he had been left out. And mate that hurts, especially when you have been the “good one” all your life. It cuts to the quick and is very hard to accept, or even rationalize.

I find it hard to accept that such a loving father would simply forget about his elder son who had been so loyal, but we all do this all the time. How easy is it for us to simply forget what people have done for us, or take it for granted, assume something is our right, “it’s their job”, even if it is the expectations of the family or any organisation.

So EB lets him have it.

Luk 15:29 And answering he said to *his* father, Lo, these many years I have served you, neither did I transgress your commandment at any time. And yet you never gave *me* a kid so that I might make merry with my friends.

Luk 15:30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fattened calf.

It speaks well of the family that he feels safe enough to vent. In many families or situations, one cannot speak freely for fear of repercussions. We can well remember this and make it safe for someone to tell us where they perceive we have stuffed up. It takes self-control not to immediately defend ourselves and block the process.

But there is a greater principle involved here.

Luk 15:31 And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

Luk 15:32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

This is all true but the father does not acknowledge EB’s hurt. The younger brother had repented and the elder one was duty bound by law and love to accept him back.

This is so hard.

**BUT**

Most people tend to forget that the younger son had to work for the family, theoretically at labourers’ rates, or food and board for the rest of his life. The level of this would have been EB’s call. How would you have handled him?

I assume they interacted socially on the same basis as one would with any person or work mate. I assume The Grub lived in the house with them. I assume EB would have been confronted with him every day, but not necessarily as bosom buddies. I think that, as long as the elder brother was polite and considerate, that was all that was necessary. We can't like everyone but we can always be polite.

## **CONCLUSION** **BOUNDARIES**

We saw that human society cannot exist without "rules" which are really just boundaries set up to protect as many people as possible.

## **SIN**

In the board sense, is any action that inflicts hurt on another, whether deliberate or otherwise.

## **BIG 10**

God knew this when He set up the world and He made all sorts of "laws" as guidelines but the most important ones are the Big 10. Every one of these causes deep pain to the sinnee. He started with the sins against Himself like other gods, idols, devaluing His name and His special time with us. He put these first because unless He is first in our lives, everything is upside down.

Then He does the human ones, honour of parents, murder, adultery, theft, where we hurt others but covertness, No 10, we hurt us.

## **JESUS**

Forgiveness is incredibly hard for us humans to do SO Jesus came to do it for us and to show us how.

He came to

- reveal His Father, the Eternal to us as a loving person, not a dictator in the sky waiting to zap us.
- To show us how much like God we are, well can be.
- To give us a living example of how humans CAN live in love and righteousness
- And most importantly, He died to pay the price for all the hurt and "sin", we ALL have inflicted on others.

## **LEVELS OF FORGIVENESS**

We saw that forgiveness was not a simple thing and there can be many levels and pathways to it.

The ultimate goal would be to continue a positive relationship of some sort. We can also accept different levels of reconciliation in order to manage day to day activities, but the important thing is that **we** can no longer hold negative emotions concerning the person or the issue in question. This may involve never seeing them again, or barbies on the weekend or restored families.

### **IT IS NOT ABOUT THEM**

Strange as it may seem, forgiveness is not based on what the other person is/does/says/ thinks or their honesty or integrity. It is based on what I am. The object is for us to open the door to peace. If we do that, we will find inner peace.

### **REPENTANCE**

Admission of sin or error comes in levels. Regret occurs when we are upset because our sin has affected us badly and we need to suck it up for our own sakes. Remorse is when we are sorry that we have hurt someone else **but**.

True repentance is when we acknowledge our sin and try to make amends.

### **RELEASE**

Exoneration usually occurs when there is a valid reason why the sin has occurred like a child or dementia or total or full repentance takes place,

Forbearance is when you suck it up, but do so in a negative way so that, superficially, all seems well.

Release is where you choose to let go of the issue and continue on but the relationship is damaged.

Reconciliation is the highest goal.

### **WORLDLY SOLUTIONS**

Then we looked at worldly ways to resolve conflict but saw that God was there long before men. How God set up a system of judges to operate at the local level but these people were just ordinary folk and the “rules” were simple. If they couldn’t resolve the issue, then the matter went to a jury. We do the same thing.

Then there was/is mediation, and the priests did this. If this didn’t work there was a higher body still.

The Bible is big on victim confrontation, or restorative justice as we call it now. The victim is given the opportunity to confront the perpetrator who in turn is made aware of the effect of his actions. Property is also returned if possible. Often just an acknowledgement of guilt can be enough. It can have amazing results for both parties. Perhaps we can look at us making amends for our “sin” if can.

Then, we looked at some of the Biblical concepts that we don’t use but perhaps should, like the accuser having to personally administer the punishment, an eye for an eye.

### **PRODIGAL SON**

And, of course, the definitive Biblical statement on forgiveness is Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son which we know off by heart

The summary is that the younger son (The Grub) duds the father by asking for his share of the estate before the old man dies

He then and takes off, blows all the money on partying, sinks to the pits and eventually comes back. Amazingly, the Dad forgives him and restores him to the family. The older brother is not impressed!!!!

We looked at the human elements in this story and just how deeply The Grub’s actions affected his family, and himself. We all know that he repented at the deepest level, and Dad forgave him and they had a party. All good. Most of us who are parents understand this.

But EB (Elder Brother) is not impressed as he has born the brunt of the pain and had behaved well all through. He has to suck it up.. and how most of us can relate to this fellow.

Jesus’ lesson is that true forgiveness is not easy and I know I struggle with the level of forgiveness Christ asks of me here. But one thing we often forget is that, while The Grub was accepted back, he had to live with the consequences of his actions.

### **TO ERR IS HUMAN**

To quote Alexander Pope again, “to err is human, but to forgive is divine”. Jesus came to earth to make this forgiveness possible and to show us how to do it.

We can follow HIM and do it, if we choose.