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Subject: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [jismazed](#) on Sun, 12 Apr 2009 22:58:03 GMT

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One of the greatest weapons for the gospel around the world has been forgiveness. When the followers of Jesus are hurt, killed, fired, divorced, displaced or maligned simply because they believe in Him, they can choose to either resent and hate their persecutors or forgive them. When they forgive them on a consistent basis, the persecutors eventually notice it and begin to understand the character of Christ. The forgiveness paves the way for the Christians to share the basis for the forgiveness- the cross of Christ- and the persecutors become believers. This has happened many times throughout church history, and it is particularly common in Muslim countries. I know that it has had a noticeable impact in parts of northern Nigeria, where there are frequent religious riots. When the Christians there attack the Muslims who attacked them, the tensions get worse and the Muslim get hardened to the gospel. When the Christians forgive, the persecutors sometimes get saved.

Clearly Jesus taught that we are to forgive a person no matter how many times they sin against us. At least 490! The pharisees taught that if a person offends another and apologizes, you need to forgive them, but if they do it 7 times then it must mean that they were not sincere, so you don't need to forgive them after that. Of course, Jesus came along and taught that not only do we forgive 7 times, but 70 x 7. This is because we all sin and offend many times, and the Lord would have wiped us all out long time ago had He limited us to just 7 times.

There's no question that we are to forgive a repentant brother as often as they need forgiveness. But 2 questions arise that need to be answered. I have my ideas based on what I believe scripture teaches, but I would like to hear from others first.

1. Do we always have to forgive someone who is not repentant for their sin against us? God forgives those who repent. Should we hold them to the same condition? (Example: One of my clients was sexually abused by her father numerous times as a child. He never repented, and he denied that he did such things. Should she forgive him anyway? Should she have called the police when she was a teenager?)

2. When we forgive, does that mean that we should not allow any negative consequences to happen to the person because of their offense against us? (Example: The woman mentioned in #1 above was expected by the family to go over to her parents house as an adult for Thanksgiving and pray around the table with the family while her father said the blessing. Should she feel like she needs to go to the Thanksgiving meal, or is she free to keep her distance from him because of what he did?)

Hint: I believe that part of the answer to these questions lies in the TWO words for forgiveness in the NT Greek language. One is more conditional than the other.

