

Speaking to the soul



Forgiveness

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Colossians 5:13

Every society is full of divisions, but Paul's world was Any happy and harmonious community relies upon forgiveness. It isn't an optional extra but an absolute necessity. However, it is also incredibly hard work, so we need to reflect very carefully upon it.

We step on one another's toes very easily. We often do it without meaning to, in complete innocence. We say or do things that we think are obviously right, but which cause hurt and unhappiness to others. And, by the same token, people step on our toes and hurt us unintentionally. The only way of coping with this inevitable part of community life is to forgive. God calls us to live with an attitude of forgiveness that graciously and lovingly moves on from the hurt without drawing attention to it.

It is relatively easy to forgive those who unintentionally hurt you, but what do you do when someone has deliberately gone out of their way to cause you harm? Surely justice demands that you settle the score with them and get your own back. However, God calls us to forgive them, and that's incredibly tough. Indeed, it's so tough that the only way we will be able to do it is by recalling that this is exactly how God has treated us. Through our thoughts, words and actions, we have sinned against God. There is absolutely no reason why he should forgive us, but that is what he has chosen to do.

Jesus made it plain that God loves to give his forgiveness to us, but it is conditional: we must be willing to pass it on to

others. This sounds easy enough until we need to forgive someone who has wronged us. That can be a difficult journey, but it is God's loving way for all of us.

QUESTION

When did you last need to forgive someone, and what did you learn from the experience?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your gift of forgiveness to me. Help me to be more generous in sharing your forgiveness with those who offend me. Amen

Photo: Starscape over Durham Cathedral

