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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: ***When you forgive someone, is it necessary, or wise to immediately "trust" them again?***

The idea that many people have in regards to forgiveness is that if you have truly forgiven someone, you are therefore obligated to "trust" them as if they had never done anything wrong to begin with. For example:

- If an unfaithful husband has committed fornication and then asks for forgiveness, the innocent wife must take him back and if she doesn't, then she's unforgiving and she will go to hell.
- Or, when a guilty fornicator makes a confession at church, *"We must allow him to preach again this Sunday, and if we don't, we're not being forgiving and we are now the ones who are sinning."*

The fallacy in this reasoning is that "forgiveness" is being equated with "trust." The two are not the same.

- ***"Forgiveness"*** is a gift of grace that is undeserved -- unearned.
- ***"Trust"*** is not a gift. Trust is something that one must earn.

The Bible warns us over and over again not trust in men, but we are certainly taught to forgive men. Thus, trust and forgiveness are not to be equated.

## **Psalms 118:8**

<sup>8</sup> It is better to trust in the LORD Than to put confidence in man.

## **Psalms 146:3**

<sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

Men must first prove themselves faithful before they are entrusted with preaching, teaching, or leadership in any form. Christians are to be forgiving, but they must be careful not to become

gullible. Unless a man has developed a good and trustworthy reputation, it is extremely unwise to trust that person.

- Men who want to be entrusted with leadership must prove themselves reliable and trustworthy: 1 Cor 4:2 says, "*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*"
- Men who would serve as elders in the church must prove themselves faithful. A great big list of qualifications is given in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 which these men must meet. But just because we test their faithfulness doesn't mean we haven't forgiven them of sins in the past.
- Deacons must prove themselves faithful. 1 Tim 3:10 says, "*But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.*"
- A young man in the Bible named John Mark had been unreliable and untrustworthy in the past and he had to now prove himself faithful before the apostle Paul would ask him to come back (Acts 15:36-41; 2 Tim 4:11).
- Over and over again the church is warned to be very discriminating about who it trusts when it comes to teaching the word of God.

### **1 John 4:1**

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is especially important when a man has proven himself to be a heretic in the past. If he has shown himself unworthy, we must forgive him (Lk 17:3-4), but entrusting him to walk back into the pulpit and preach again before he demonstrates faithfulness, is uncalled for.

You may recall a few years ago that Jimmy Swaggart, the preacher for the Assemblies of God, was caught red-handed in a sexual scandal with a prostitute. The story was so popular it made national television news. It was on the front of all the tabloids in the supermarkets. The congregation where Mr. Swaggart preached was in turmoil as to what they should do. Many in the congregation wanted to "forgive" him and by that they meant they wanted him to be able to keep right on preaching as though nothing had ever happened. Others felt he should step down from the pulpit. These people wanting him to step down were being villainized as though they were unforgiving and heartless. This controversy illustrates very well the difference between "forgiveness" and "trust."

- We must forgive people when they repent and ask for forgiveness (Lk 17:3-4).

- However, we are not required to "trust" that person until he proves himself trustworthy and reliable again.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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