

## **BEING REMINDED OF NEEDING TO FORGIVE**

One responsibility I have currently is being the clerk of the Presbytery of Paris. There are a lot of administrative aspects to this position including registering clergy with Service Ontario to perform weddings. I was contacted by a minister a month ago asking for my help to get him a temporary licence to perform a wedding in May. He gave me all of the details pertaining to the wedding, so I typed up a letter supporting his application for a temporary licence and mailed it to him to include in his correspondence with Service Ontario.

A week after sending the letter I received a phone call from him that he had given me the wrong date for the wedding. He apologized for the mistake and asked if I would send a new letter of endorsement with the proper date on it. I was glad to do it for him.

Another week passed and I received a call again from this same minister. When he received my second letter, he realized he had given me the wrong date again. He felt so bad and said, "I hope you can forgive me for all of the trouble I am causing you." He could not see me smiling on the other end of the phone, but I replied, "I am a minister. Forgiveness is part of the job." I sent the letter of endorsement off a third time thinking this minister finally had everything he needed to submit his application.

The following week I received another phone call from this minister. He told me he had made a mistake in filling out certain dates on one of the applications I had forwarded to him, and asked if I could send another one to him. Four times I heard apologies and each time I forgave, despite the inconvenience and cost each mistake created for me. What helped me to forgive him each time was being conscious of the reality that forgiveness goes with the job.

This same awareness helped me to be forgiving at the bank in the midst of that same four week period. I went to the bank right when it opened one day to try and avoid the long lineups. There were about five people ahead of me in the line but only three tellers were on. The first three people with the tellers were not just making simple deposits but had complicated tasks they needed assistance with. Despite only one person in front of me there was no movement in the line for the first 15 minutes.

The line behind me, however, was getting longer and longer. Other tellers were there besides the three but none of them were opening up despite the long line that was forming. One of my pet peeves is waiting in slow lines that do not move so it is easy to imagine how I was getting a little frustrated. Finally, after 20 minutes, another teller opened up. When I got there, she apologized for the wait. I felt like saying something, but I remembered how this teller would be seeing shortly that the Rev. Dean Adlam was written on one of the cheques I was depositing. Being conscious of this, I decided not to voice my frustrations and chose to be forgiving.

Sometimes we need to be reminded of our need to be forgiving of others. It is so easy to encounter inconveniences like I did in these two situations and become angry or agitated. I have talked about this happening more and more coming out of the pandemic as people have less patience for others and express their anger. It is so easy for us in these moments to say things that are out of character. Depending who is on the receiving end of these comments, we may or may not get the chance to apologize afterward.

I think it is important for us to have conscious reminders of our need to be Christ-like and forgiving beforehand, so we avoid responding in ways we regret. Perhaps one conscious reminder that could help us with this is remembering how many times Jesus told Peter we need to forgive. In Matthew 18, Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive somebody. Back in those day, rabbis taught that people should forgive someone three times if they had been offended by them. In his question to Jesus, Peter was a bit more generous in his forgiveness by asking whether he should extend it to seven times. Jesus replied:

**"No, not seven times, but seventy times seven!" (Matthew 18:22)**

Being a former accountant, I know that  $70 \times 7$  equals 490. Being a minister, I know that Jesus was really saying we should not keep track of how many times we have forgiven people, but that it should be part of our nature as believers. I am sure if our memories allowed us to remember, we would realize **God has forgiven us more than 490 times** for things we have done wrong. If we remind ourselves of this truth each time somebody's mistake may be causing us to become frustrated hopefully it will help us be forgiving in these instances.

If this story about Peter does not come to mind, then maybe we should focus on the cross instead. If we remind ourselves in these situations that Jesus died for our sins on the cross in order to secure our forgiveness, hopefully it will help us to respond with forgiveness instead of anger when inconvenienced by other people's mistakes. Reminding myself that I am a minister when I go through these situations helps me to be more forgiving and Christ-like. If we remind ourselves of Peter's question and also that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, hopefully we too will respond with forgiveness whenever other people's mistakes inconvenience us.

I am writing this on Monday. Tomorrow will mark two full weeks since I sent the last supporting letter to the minister. If I do not hear from him on Tuesday, I will assume everything is good. If he does call however, I still have many more times to be forgiving. Don't we all!

God Bless and Keep Safe

Pastor Dean