

Forgiveness and Amnesty

Eddie Guerrero's character in Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) was a cheater. He was a lovable bad guy. He would do anything ... lie, cheat, steal to win. Then, when asked about his "tactics," he would say, "*Yeah, we lie, we cheat, we steal... but at least we're honest about it!*"

That is truly a great line for wrestling, but not for real life.

Eddie would charmingly say this when having been accused of lying, cheating and/or stealing, and we'd forgive him!

We'd continue to buy tickets to WWE events, we'd continue to tune in to the TV programs, we'd buy the WWE merchandise - even Eddie Guerrero's merchandise, and support the sponsors, etc. There was no grudge. Many of us, including me, loved Eddie: his lovable, lying, cheating, stealing character. He was forgiven.

So? There's a lot of talk about forgiveness and even amnesty going around these days: forgiveness and amnesty for all the things that were perpetrated upon the humans on Planet Earth in the name of public health; in the name of fighting and defeating a so-called pandemic.

It is now common knowledge that ***none*** of those things perpetrated upon us was warranted, helpful, or in many cases even real, and all of them were harmful in one way or another; many in several ways.

Here's the problem: **Those "lovable" perpetrators are still in charge.**

The ethical person, *who must now move forward in his/her life with the perpetrators still in charge*, is faced with the question: **To forgive or not to forgive.** A legitimate question, to be sure.

We must address the matter, for we cannot ignore what's been done, and the damage it has caused on myriad fronts: economic/personal/political/familial/business/health/emotional, etc., etc., etc.

Can we go on without forgiveness, just being grudgingly but properly angry? Can or will there be some conciliatory action coming from those perpetrators? (We will discuss the matter of them remaining in charge at another time; another legitimate question.)

Unfortunately, there are such misconceptions of forgiveness that the question becomes difficult and actually comprises multiple questions. Among them:

- Must forgiveness come as a matter of course?
- Must any restoration of the relationship that has been violated happen immediately?
- Is that restoration even possible/necessary/mandated?
- What are the responsibilities of the forgiver and the "forgivee"?
- Does the "forgivee" even have any responsibilities at all in this transaction, or must all the work be done by the offended/forgiver?

All good questions, all misunderstood, few ever even asked. Let's address some of them now.

First of all, forgiveness is necessary for human function and interaction. Without it – well, I don't have to tell you.

But when and how it happens is not so simple. The “offense” is normally begun with a deception of some sort. (I say *begun*, because nothing happens like a light switch. Deception is a process.)

In all cases, there is at least one common deception. It goes like this: “*I thought you could be trusted, and so I trusted you. I now realize that you cannot be trusted and you may indeed hurt/offend/kill me.*”

The trust has been broken. The relationship, which *required* some degree of trust in order to even exist in the first place, has been broken. Some broken relationships can never be mended. Some can. If there is ever to be a “mending” of the relationship, a reconciliation, there must be forgiveness. True forgiveness precedes true reconciliation. Always.

But true forgiveness requires a “coming clean,” does it not? If the dirty deed stays under wraps and doesn’t get revealed, indeed, confessed, accounted for, corrected and resolved, then there hasn’t really been any coming clean. Has there?

One may legitimately question, how is forgiveness possible if there is never any recognition of wrongdoing, of relational violation, of breaking of trust, of _____ (fill in the blank).

One may legitimately answer: It cannot.

Has that answered the question about forgiveness and amnesty for the perpetrators, or must we beat this dead horse?