

*Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*  
*July 18, 2021*  
*“Forgiveness”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.*

*NEWS*

Women’s Gathering Wednesday, July 21, at 6:30

Men’s Breakfast, Saturday, July 24, at 8:00

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ [www.myaletheia.com](http://www.myaletheia.com)

New Podcast Host: [myaletheia.podbean.com](http://myaletheia.podbean.com) Or go to Spotify, and type in [myaletheia](http://myaletheia)

Like us on Facebook (aletheiachristianfellowship)

Emails: [pastor@myaletheia.com](mailto:pastor@myaletheia.com), [stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com](mailto:stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com)

Right relationships are actually the entire \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

After God, the highest priority is “One another” and that means those \_\_\_\_\_ closest to you rippling outward from there.

How much does Jesus love His Bride? He \_\_\_\_\_ in her place, the innocent on behalf of the guilty. Further, if men do not treat their wife properly, God will \_\_\_\_\_ hear their prayers (Ephesians 5:25, I Peter 3:7). Wives, \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves to your own husband (Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 5:24).

Family (I Timothy 5:8), the church (John 13&15, I John 3:14), the lost (Matthew 28:19&20, Romans 10:13-15), creation (Psalm 115:16).

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Don't offend. When you do, recognize it, and "Confess." Ideally, they will \_\_\_\_\_ you, and pray for you, and will see their own shortcomings, and correct them as well. Right relationship will be \_\_\_\_\_. Christ will be proclaimed, and God will be glorified.

This is Christianity.

When you offend someone it's irrelevant how you feel about their \_\_\_\_\_. If you love them, you don't need to agree, you just need to hurt with them and do what you can to help.

The word confess is ὁμολογέω (hō-mō-lōg-ē-ō), sometimes with the preposition ἐκ (ĕk).

When you are the injured party asked to \_\_\_\_\_, focus on their confession, rather than your feelings.

Nothing is gifted to the person who has earned it (Romans 4:4). Forgiving someone who has \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness is not forgiveness.

You withhold forgiveness at your own peril (Matthew 6:14&15, 18:22, Luke 17:1-10).

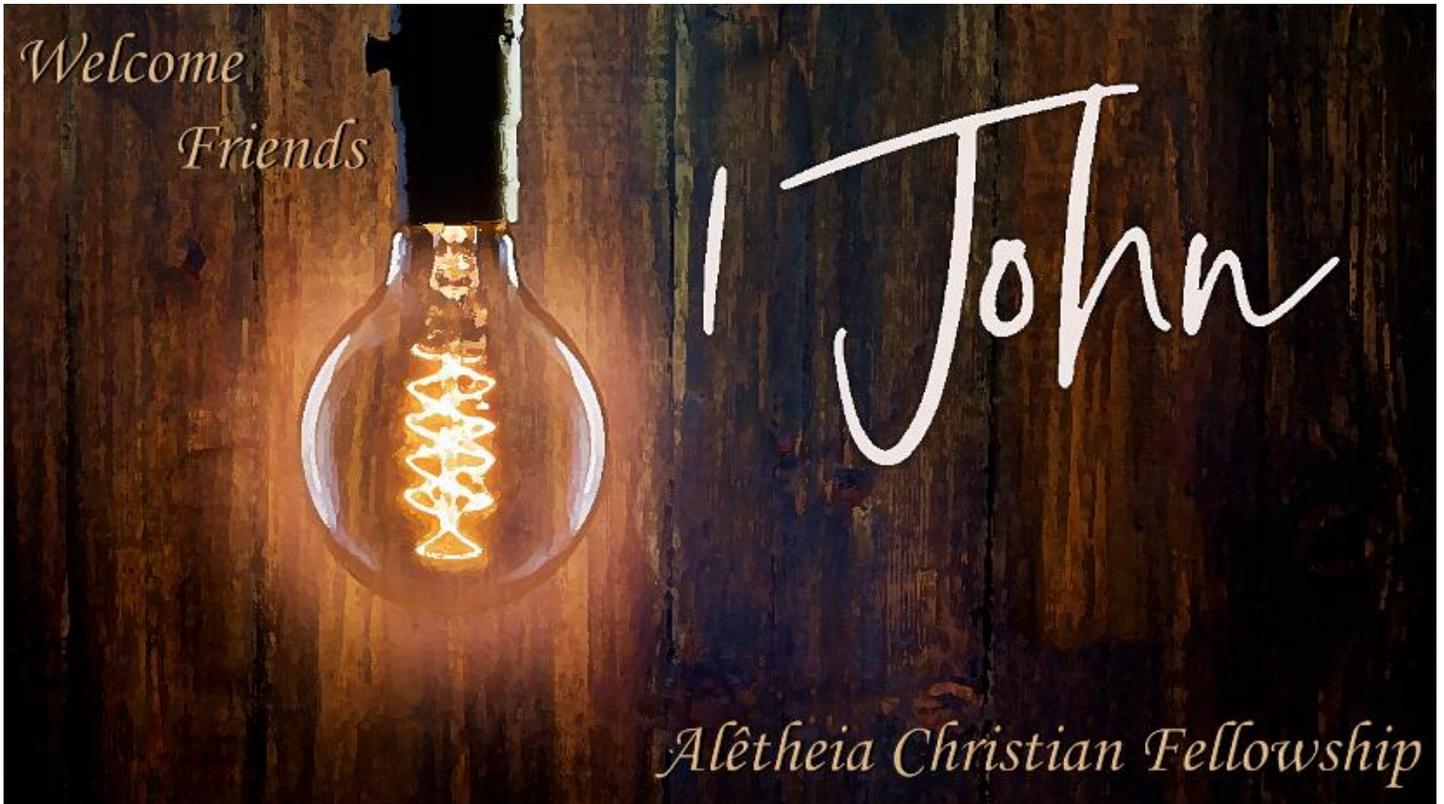
It's about allowing the Spirit to enable you to be a blessing and not a curse. According to I John, those avoiding church do not have the Truth in them.

-----  
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

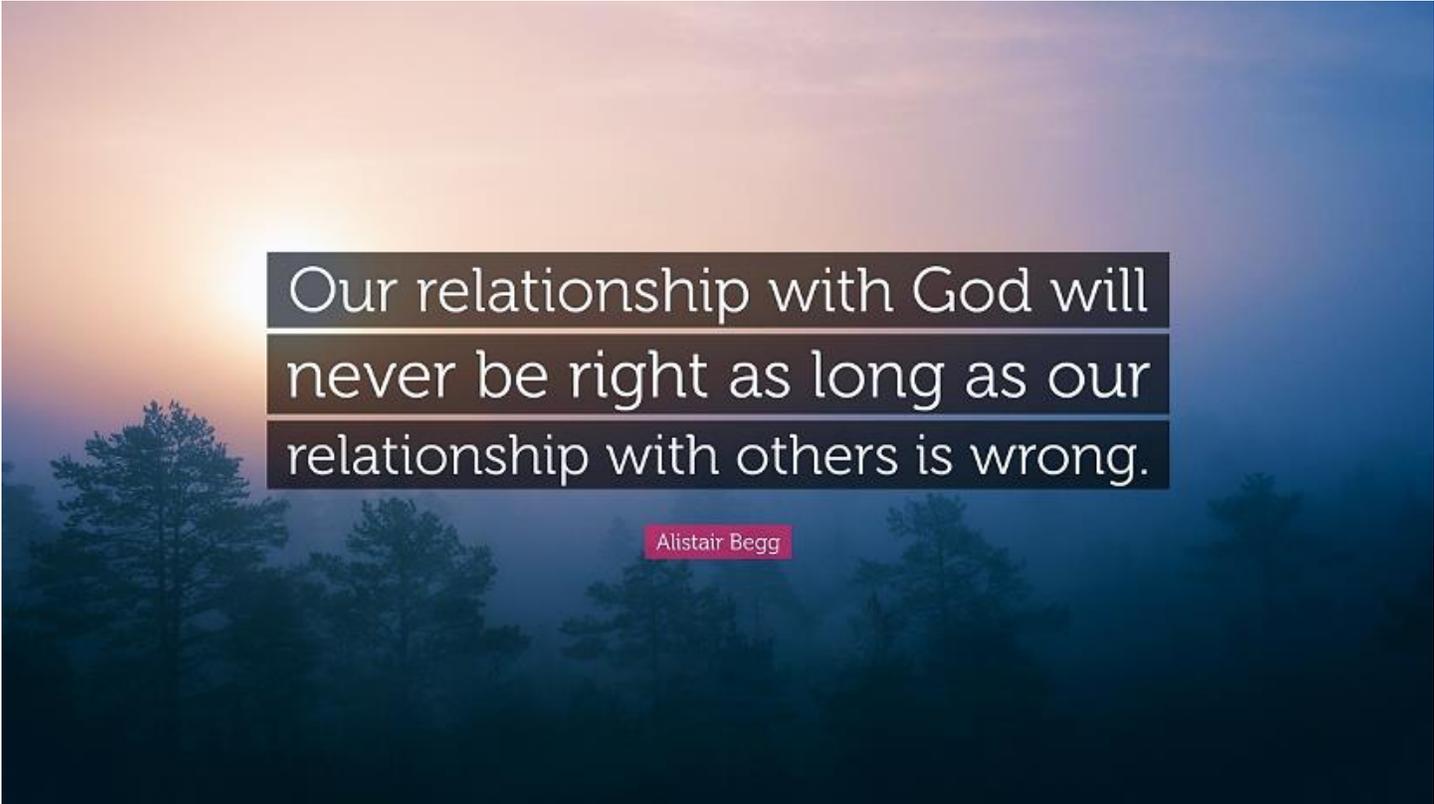
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



Last week we talked extensively about right relationships and how that is actually the entire goal of Christianity... That's a huge statement... Right relationships are actually the entire goal of what Jesus accomplished on the Cross. His sacrifice was an obedience born out of love and was itself a demonstration of love. That particular love is self-sacrificing by definition - it is patient and merciful by definition - it is right-relating by definition. What was "Finished" at Calvary was the enablement for sinful and dying, fallen and depraved, human beings to rightly relate to their Creator and from that right relationship to

then be able to rightly, or at the very least, to better relate to everyone and everything else.

A quote by Alistair Begg is displayed in white text on a dark, semi-transparent background. The background of the entire slide is a sunset or sunrise over a forest of trees. The quote is: "Our relationship with God will never be right as long as our relationship with others is wrong."

Our relationship with God will  
never be right as long as our  
relationship with others is wrong.

Alistair Begg

Those subsidiary right relationships are prioritized in a hierarchical ordering starting with your most intimate personal relationships. Our human relationships are not equal.

After God, the highest priority is “One another” and that means those Christians closest to you. “One another” means real connection, real fellowship. It cannot possibly refer to a brother on the other side of the planet to the detriment of the sister sitting five rows

away from you in the local church. It's easy to love the martyr in Nigeria killed by Boko Haram in front of his wife and children for refusing to deny Christ, what's tough is to love Sister Bertha better-than-you and her berserk squirrel in the amen pew of the First Self-Righteous Church.



Those Christian relationships ripple outward starting with the most important human relationship in existence. No relationship can take precedence over the marital covenant between Believers in the sight of God.

It is more important than your parents and more important than your children... That relationship is utterly defining, because it is the most difficult, because it is the closest, most intimate, most interconnected. A person who has that right, and I mean right, not just a complacent truce between disconnected parties, a person who works diligently to have a vibrant, growing, loving friendship with their spouse has shown that God's love is perfected in them. Other relationships should be much easier as long as we have our perspective right.

You chose to covenant with that other person and become one flesh with them in the sight of a holy and just God... Tread carefully. The Bible tells men that they are supposed to love their wives to the same degree and in the same way that Jesus Christ loves the church. How much is that? He sacrificed Himself for her even though she was guilty, and He was innocent.

Further, the Bible tells husbands that if they are not treating their wife with dignity and respect they may as well not even attempt to pray - God's not listening. You

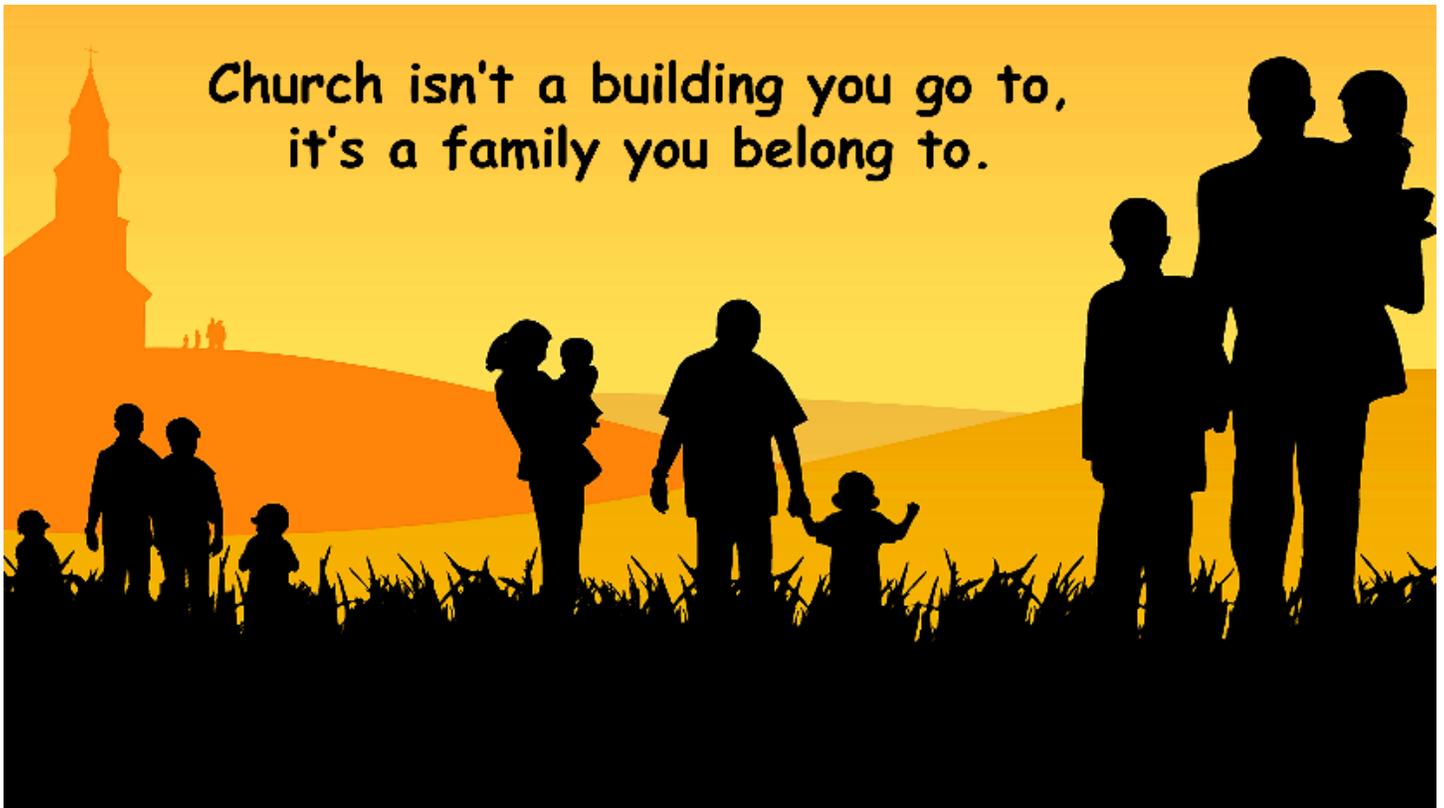
feel like your prayers go no farther than the ceiling... Perhaps now you know why.

Wives, God tells you to submit yourselves to your own husband. You find that your relationship with God isn't what you hoped it would be... Well perhaps now you know why.



Beyond that it is your immediate family - the people under your roof. They are followed by your extended family to the degree that they exist in your sphere of influence. The Bible declares that anyone not taking

care of their own relatives is worse than an unbeliever (I Timothy 5:8).



After that it is your local church family. We have a huge number of people in our society who claim to be Christians, but who do not engage with, and participate in, a local church family. Don't tell me that you're a devoted follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and then tell me you are not a vibrant and loyal member of local church family. While it is far easier to "Love one another" from afar, it is only a lie. Right relationship demands that there is a relationship!



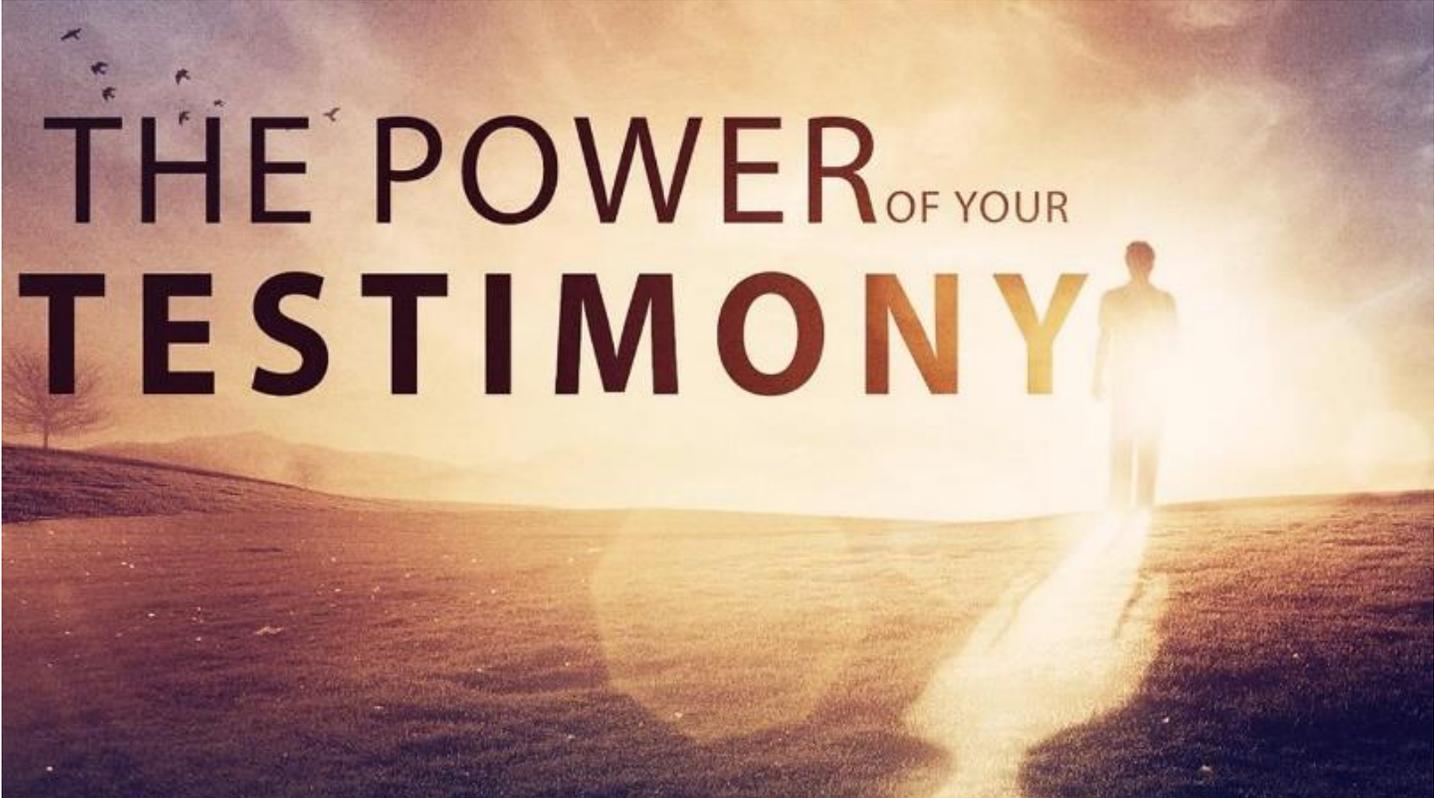
Speaking only to those who are not vital members of a close-knit church family... I hear so many dumb things on this score that I've lost my sense of humor about it. "Well, I don't like church because the church hurt me." Right, it's hurt everyone - grow up! Do you seriously want to compare scars... So, put your big boy pants on and either join a church or just be honest about the fact that you are a person who will obey Christ only when His demands match your desires.

"Well, I can't find a good church." What an astoundingly arrogant thing to say! What makes you so wonderful that no church in the area is good enough for you? All this means is that you are so pridefully opinionated that

you cannot get along with others, let alone submit to someone in Christian authority. "I just want to have church in my home." Right, so that you can retain total control. "I don't like organized church; my church is the mountains." An idiotic statement! Anyone can worship God when they're by themselves enjoying a tremendous vista. That takes precisely zero character. Try to do what Jesus actually commanded by sacrificing your "Me time," and worshipping Him in the middle of a bunch of fellow imperfect people. - that takes some Holy Spirit character. "Well, that's just it, the church is full of hypocrites." Perfect, you'll fit right in.



From loving your fellow Christians as Christ commanded by being an integral part of a local church, we then love all other Christians in the order of their proximity to our lives. That means the Christians of the Flathead valley in our case and then radiating out, but potentially with other pockets of deeper connection. We will soon have a deeper connection to Christians in Turkey once again.



THE POWER<sub>OF YOUR</sub>  
**TESTIMONY**



THE POWER<sub>OF YOUR</sub>  
**TESTIMONY**

**ANOTHER PERFECT EXAMPLE OF AMERICAN  
CHRISTIANITY BEING ALL ABOUT ME.**

**YOUR TESTIMONY IS A MESSAGE TO A LOST PERSON  
FROM GOD THAT JUST HAPPENS TO BE WRITTEN ON  
YOUR LIFE — IT ISN'T ABOUT YOU!**

From there, our attention turns to the Lost. There's a saying, "Why have enemies, when you can have friends?" The only thing wrong with the worst people on the planet is they need to be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray, model, and testify. Love non-Christians enough to share Christ with them and when most of them rudely reject you, recognize that they are rejecting Jesus, not you, and so pray for them all the more.



Beyond human beings we have animals. They are God's creation for our benefit. All animals should be treated with dignity and respect and that means as

humanely as practical. From there the inanimate world. Bottom line we rightly-relate to the creation when we act as the good stewards of it that God appointed us to be.



In all of that, we make mistakes. We make lots and lots of mistakes. According to I John we are to recognize those mistakes and take immediate and proactive positive steps to rectify them. We are to “Confess our sins” To whom? To one another. To those we have offended and ideally, they will forgive as necessary, they will pray for us as appropriate, they will see their own shortcomings and correct them as applicable.

Right relationship will be restored, and everyone grows as they have honored God, obeyed Christ and proven the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is Christianity.

As I said last week, this is precisely what James was talking about in the fifth chapter of his Bible book. The Biblical confessional is openly, honestly, humbly, asking the ones we have offended for their forgiveness. On the other side of that coin, Jesus tells us that if we are the injured party and fail to grant such a request for forgiveness, we ourselves are then left unforgiven. This is Christianity.

When we do what we're supposed to do, by asking for forgiveness, when we have offended others, and by granting forgiveness when we are asked, then the Community of Christ - the church - Alêtheia functions to the glory of God. Is this really Christianity - is this really what it's all about? Yes, my friends, a thousand times, YES! A rightly relating church family is the tangible thing that points to Christ and His completed work. How can we human beings know that Christ died for our sins and that we have right relationship with God? Only through our growing desire to rightly relate to

other Christians even though it will come at a personal cost. Please realize that it will come at your expense, which is why so many refuse to participate even though they come up with all sorts of ridiculous rationalizations for not attending church. Jesus quietly paid the cost of right relationship with you... Will you refuse to do likewise?

Actively avoiding giving offense is hard, actively discerning when you have given offense is difficult. Actively seeking forgiveness for such an offense is humbling, actively granting forgiveness when you are the offended party is also humbling. Being right with God because we are right with each other is priceless.



I mentioned the Catholic Confessional. It was far too easy to secretly confess one's sins to a priest sworn to confidentiality and bound by oath to forgive. Commit a whole host of sins, be completely unrepentant, confess your crimes to a priest and voilà, you're forgiven. Surely, one must be contrite - one must be shown the gravity of sin, one must be penalized at least enough to discourage them sinning in the future... So the Church came up with penance. You must earn your forgiveness in some way, shape, or form. Some "Our Fathers," a few "Hail Marys," maybe light a candle. First, can you see that any penance at all, no matter how insignificant, is me contributing to my forgiveness

and therefore to my salvation by earning some portion thereof? In that case, no matter how you slice it, Jesus is my Savior in part, and I am my Savior in part. We are partners in my own holiness and ultimate salvation. Can you see how that system contributes to a holier-than-thou attitude? It leads to personal pride instead of the Biblical humble gratitude.

My actual point in bringing up the Confessional again is that no matter how sorry we are for our offense against another, we are never as sorry as they are, or at least never as sorry as they think we should be. A good portion of the time we don't even understand why the other party was so offended!



“You really triggered me with that slide.” To which someone might think, “Snowflake!” Look, if someone accidentally punches you in the nose and then apologizes profusely, that’s nice, but they are not nearly as hurt as you are. If someone deeply betrays you, it is far easier for them to genuinely say, I’m so sorry, I’ll never do that again, than it is for you to genuinely say, no worries, all is forgiven, we’re buddies again.



Understand my friends, that when you offend someone it's completely irrelevant how you feel about the legitimacy of their feelings, or degree of their hurt. If you love them, you don't need to agree, you just need to hurt with them and do what you can to help. Genuine sorrow for the pain they feel and a sincere request to be forgiven is a great start... It's called confessing your sin to one another.



The word confess is ὁμολογέω (hō-mō-lōg-ē-ō), sometimes with the preposition ἐκ (ĕk). The first bit is where we get our word homo as in homogenous, or the word you thought of... It just means, the same - something that is the same. The second bit is related to Logos and means a message that is coherent and serious. It isn't just talking, it's saying something.

Put them together and it means, saying what is identical to what you truly feel and believe. Biblical confession isn't just admitting that you got caught, or giving some mental assent to a proposition. It is openly professing what is inside of you. When the preposition

is attached to the beginning it makes it a more public profession. The two constructions occur a total of 36 times in the New Testament. Most have to do with confessing Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior. It isn't a true confession of Christ, or of your sin, unless it is a transparent truth about you. Not just heartfelt, but heart-real.

So, be thoughtful and generous in your apology and be patient with their response. Focus on their pain, rather than your pride. On the other side of the coin, when you are the injured party approached by the offender asking you for forgiveness, focus on their confession, rather than your feelings. When you weigh the choice to either forgive, or to delay your forgiveness indefinitely, be careful. On the side of delaying, you don't have to fight your own feelings. That's about all I can say in favor of that choice. It's easier. Someone might say, well, another plus to delaying forgiveness is that the offended party can keep the moral high ground longer. No, not once a genuine confession has been proffered. The moral high ground is lost to the person who refuses to forgive a serious request for forgiveness.



The reason we withhold forgiveness has to do with the hurt we've experienced. We want God and the offender and others we drag into the situation to know just how seriously we've been hurt. To forgive quickly and seemingly easily, we think we're saying that the offense wasn't that bad. If it wasn't that bad, then our forgiveness isn't seen as the grand magnanimous gesture that we feel it is and since others would perceive it as less significant perhaps, they would feel more comfortable offending us again.

We couple those fears with a human concept that forgiveness must be earned. We think that in order to

forgive a person that person needs to be worthy of our forgiveness. They need to deserve it by first being punished, or in some way rehabilitated over time. My friends, you grant nothing to the person who has earned it... If they earn it, you owe them their due. God's Word tells us that "When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation" (Romans 4:4). Forgiving someone who has earned forgiveness is not forgiveness - it's just acknowledging the facts.

We also think that if we are the cause of suffering, and we are made to suffer because of it, that when we have suffered enough what we did is paid for and blotted out - it's now okay. Our justice system may not say that's what it's about, but we punish convicted criminals to make them suffer in return for the suffering they caused. A person gets out of prison, and we all say that he has paid his debt to society. My friends, no matter how much you suffer, it will never erase the suffering you caused - never.

- 
- 1) Do not to sin
  - 2) Admit when you do sin
  - 3) Confess your sin

- 1) Allow your offender to confess
- 2) Forgive them
- 3) Be free

It's only ever about 1) trying not to sin, 2) being honest and humble when you do, as in fully owning your transgression, but also being grieved that you hurt someone you care about and so 3) actively doing whatever you can to repair the broken relationship. As for forgiving, nothing that happens to you in this life has any impact on your eternity, but how you react and respond to those things absolutely does. Keep a big picture and know that your self-sacrificing gift of forgiveness mirrors the forgiveness you have received... God sees all - He knows - trust Him.



Let's look at it from that angle. Imagine if God said to you, this thing you did is really bad and it hurt my feelings, so no, I'm not going to forgive you today as requested and therefore I'm going to insist that our relationship will remain distant, and awkward, and just not right, until I see more repentance from you, more time for you to consider my pain. I need to see you suffer a bit and then I'll consider whether there's hope for us in the future.

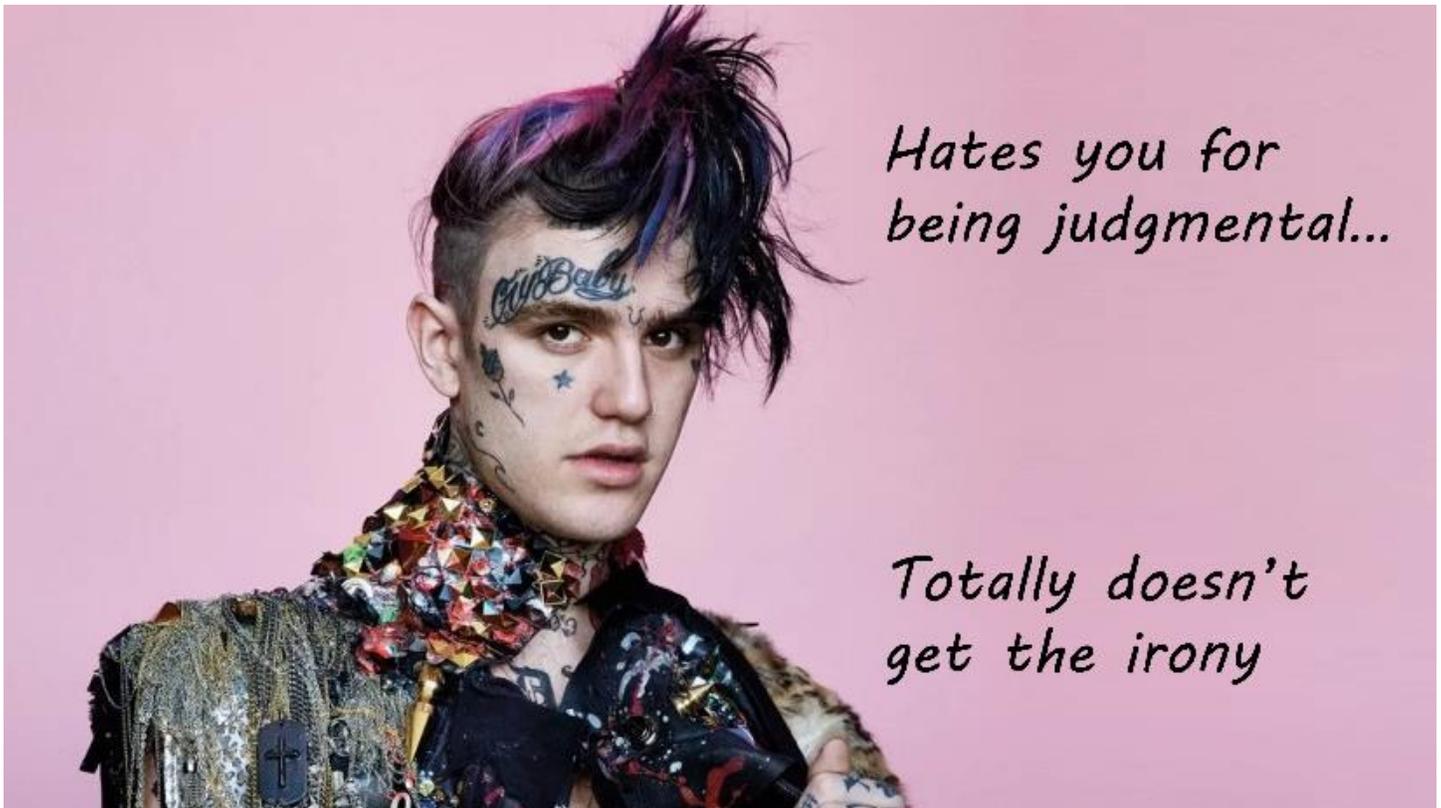
As God's kid's we're supposed to be like Him. If you view God, the way I just described. If you believe in the idea of penance and purgatory. If you avoid God when

you sin as if time will make it better, then it stands to reason that you'd be a person who withholds, or at least conditions forgiveness as well.



If you view God as He is depicted in the Bible... As a Father who loves so much that He Himself paid the price by sending His One and Only to suffer and die for us. As a Savior battered and brutalized to enable right relationship through forgiveness, as opposed to wallowing in the dysfunction, pain, and fear associated with unforgiveness. As a Holy Spirit that opens the mind and the heart, guiding, teaching, encouraging, comforting... If that's your view of God, it will be proven

by how readily you forgive others, who don't deserve it, just as much as you don't deserve it.



Therein lies a major part of the problem. We imagine our worthiness as more than it is and our transgressions as less. We compare ourselves to others at their point of weakness and our point of strength. Judgmental people, always judge from their own areas of success. The objects of their critical judgment are only those failing in those same areas. A former smoker is oftentimes the worst critic of smokers... Why? She successfully defeated the addiction - active smokers obviously are too weak to

follow suit. We're pretty good at seeing the gravity of sin in others - very bad at seeing it in ourselves. Ask God daily to show you who you truly are without Him.

By being unforgiving you get to hold on to your pain and your victimization. You get to become more bitter and even less forgiving. You get to see the relationship deteriorate further and further to the point where the other person will give up and will likely find other relationships to take the place of what you once had. You get to demonstrate to all that you don't recognize your own shortcomings and the forgiveness you have from Christ's precious blood. I could go on, suffice it to say... You withhold forgiveness at your own peril. The words of Jesus are not complicated...

**“FOR IF YOU FORGIVE OTHERS FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSIONS, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU. BUT IF YOU DO NOT FORGIVE OTHERS, THEN YOUR FATHER WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS”  
~ JESUS**

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14&15).

What's more important? To hold on to your hurt, or to be like Christ?

Another way to put it is Christianity is all about following Jesus... That means being conformed to Him as His disciple... That means obeying what it is that He commands... That means loving one another.

Regardless of how others react, when we obediently self-sacrificingly work to foster right relationship from whichever side of the equation, we happen to find ourself on, we are fully cleansed from all that is un-right in our relationship with God. We cannot control how others will react, it's ultimately between them and God, but we can keep the door to right relationship open to them by being as forgiving to them as Jesus was to us.

At this point you may be thinking that if you forgive everyone who asks, you'll simply become a doormat. What if someone slaps me on my right cheek? Give him a fresh opportunity to slap you on your left cheek - what?!? How many times would I forgive such a person? If you refer to Matthew 18:22, and you can perform simple some multiplication, and you're a legalist, the answer is 490 times. If you look at Jesus' words in Luke 17:3&4, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." You may be thinking that's crazy! Well, you're in good company. In the very next verse the Apostles said to Jesus, "Increase our faith!" They understood what

Jesus was requiring and they knew that they didn't have it in them, hence their plea for His help.

Just so you know, the verses I read start with "Be on your guard!" The ESV has it, "Pay attention to yourselves!" The NET is simply, "Watch yourselves!" Odd, to start with that. It's a pivot phrase tying what came before to what comes after. What came before? From the children's Bible (NLT), Luke 17:1-10, 1One day Jesus said to his disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! 2It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones (God's children - you and me) to fall into sin. 3So watch yourselves!" Jesus concluded with these words from verse 10, "When you obey me (by working diligently to rightly relate to each other) you should say, 'We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.' "

Jesus indicated that the reward for doing your duty would come in the future - when it's payday, for now, obeying His command to do everything you can to foster unity and harmony in the church is your obligation - your duty. Jesus was talking to the church

and telling us that there is all manner of things that can trip people up and it is inevitable that some people will in fact be tripped up, but woe to you if you are the cause of the stumbling - cause of the offence.

You can be the cause in one of two ways... First, if you offend someone and do not take proactive steps fixing it - "Confessing your sin" to the offended party. The other way you can be the cause is if you withhold forgiveness.

When you actively forgive those who humbly genuinely ask, you are simply doing the minimum a person saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ should do.

It does require faith. Faith that God will sort it all out in the end. You do your job and trust that God will do His.

It's about allowing the Holy Spirit to enable you to be a blessing and not a curse to God and those around you. You cannot do it on your own, but if we understand, and we are intentional, and we rely on His power for His great glory, we can get along and thereby prove that Jesus Christ is our Lord.

According to I John people who disregard Christ's command to actively love other Christians by having actual right relationship with them do not have the Truth in them. That means being an active participant in a local church family. You cannot possibly rationalize how you can love other Christians when you refuse to regularly gather together with them. If that seems harsh, please, by all means, take it up with the Author.

