

## **Giving Forgiveness at Work at Work**

YOU HURT ME!!!! How those words and related sentiments ring in our minds when we feel that someone has wronged us.

When I am hurt, angry, upset, bitter toward a person who has caused me injury, I relish the anger, the thoughts of revenge, the planning for getting even. I spend my time picking at the scabs of my hurt, keeping it fresh. I cultivate my resentment. Why should I forgive him/her?

Have you ever given a gift that actually gave more to you than to the recipient?

Forgiveness is that kind of gift. Hard to imagine, but true. Without forgiveness I am in the grip of my emotional response to the hurt. When I choose to forgive, what I am doing is choosing to give up the resentment that I feel. I free myself of the tangle of controlling emotions. I am able to get on with my life, to find peace and even joy. In life I choose my response to whatever is done to me, and I choose forgiveness.

This is not to say everything returns to the same status as before the injury done to me. I give up the resentment and with it the ideas or plans for revenge or retribution. Instead, I learn from the experience to protect myself in the future in similar situations. I give up my resentment toward the one who injured me and I allow the ordinary course of law and nature to bring accountability to the one who caused the injury.

An outstanding example of forgiveness occurred in October 2006. The Amish community of West Nickels Mine, PA forgave the man who had killed five of their children and wounded five others in a school house shooting. As individuals and as a community they chose not to hold a grudge, not to allow resentment to control their actions. Members of the community visited and comforted the killer's widow (he had committed suicide after shooting the girls in the schoolhouse). They extended forgiveness before being asked and gave consolation to his parents, his wife, and his children, even to setting up a charitable fund for the children.

Fortunately at work our opportunities for giving forgiveness usually do not involve life and death, but they are challenging none the less. Once I had an employment contract non-renewed for improper reasons. While I did choose to file a lawsuit, I also chose not to let my hurt feelings dominate my work until the end of my contract four months later. Instead I chose to systematically document the current status of all work in my office along with the plans for future actions. I wrote a manual to guide use and updating of an employee data base that I had built and could easily have destroyed or simply left undocumented and hence basically unusable. I never worked for that employer again but I left it better for my being there.

Each time someone does something that affronts me, I have the choice of how I will respond. In the moment between perceiving the affront and giving my response, I choose. If someone takes credit for something I did, I choose to resent or not to resent. If a colleague tells me they will do something for me and then does not deliver, I choose to resent or not to resent. If a co-worker represents data as complete and accurate when it is not, I choose to resent or not to resent.

I do not choose to ignore the action that hurt; rather I choose not to look back but to look forward. I choose to learn from the experience. I choose to be free of anger and resentment. I choose to forgive.

## **GIVING FORGIVENESS — A Faith Based Value at Work**

1. What does applying the faith-based value of giving forgiveness in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of giving forgiveness in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of giving forgiveness in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based giving forgiveness in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?