

The Journey of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a progressive learning experience. Once the journey has begun you have unleashed a process that inevitably will bring the truth of who you are to your awareness. There may seem to be any number of “reasons” we are moved to begin the forgiveness process, but whatever their appearance, it is in response to an innate knowing there is a peaceful and loving Self that we have overlooked.

The journey of forgiveness may take different forms or go by different names, but all are needed to free us from the misperception of our guilt—the cause of all our pain and suffering, our anger and our hate. Once begun, the freedom we find from releasing our judgments opens our mind to discovering a self and a world we could not have previously conceived of. The experience of peace and happiness expose the loving Self we had only hoped was there before.

Three Levels of Awareness

Forgiveness is a journey that progresses through three levels of awareness. The time it takes seems to vary in the ego’s use of time, but the outcome is inevitable and waits only on our acceptance of it. The clarity of our wish to be free is what sets the tone for the nature of our experience of these three stages, each of which is needed to lower our resistance to the next.

1. The traditionally accepted purpose of forgiveness is the attempt to overlook what someone has done to us. Forgiveness is attempted despite how “deserved” the guilt may seem. Behavior judged unacceptable is frequently excused because “they are doing the best they can.” This inevitably results in one elevating themselves to a “higher” moral status and prevents any real joining from taking place.

Since the issue of the reality of sin and guilt has not been addressed, our belief has not fundamentally changed here. Yet something has significantly shifted in our awareness. We have touched a loving place in us that will never again be satisfied to hate and judge as we have before.

2. As we learn it is our thoughts that make our world and take responsibility for creating our own experiences, we begin to see that our judgment of others is meaningless. It is here we discover we only have judged ourselves and then tried to make others guilty in our place. The purpose of forgiveness now is changed. Here we can begin to look at why our own thoughts are charged with guilt. Forgiveness now becomes self-directed. The defenses against a “guilty” brother are no longer needed. This is the beginning of real forgiveness.

Real forgiveness is now possible, but unlikely if left to the devices of our ego or separate self that does not know how to forgive. We must surrender to our inner Guide, the Presence of our God Created Self that is in a perpetual state of forgiveness seeing everything from the perspective of Its wholeness. Forgiveness is the means of the journey from our false separate identity to our Real Self.

3. Realizing it is untrue thoughts that make our world, its reality can at last be challenged. We now have basis for realizing it has no more reality than a dream. We now know that nothing “real” happens here. We now understand that guilt was self-imposed and we had become lost in a cycle of attack and defense. Now we see there is nothing real to judge—nothing to forgive. The figures and the adventures they have are meaningless outside the story they tell. This realization is the freedom of “real” forgiveness.

It is at first nearly impossible to understand that what we judge is only an idea happening in a story that is no more real than our night dreaming. It seems equally implausible that if we did not judge ourselves no one else would judge us either.

This understanding would have no meaning to those who are struggling to simply survive what seems to be a world over which they yet have no control. Taking responsibility for their hunger and their misery, forgiving the one who seems to persecute them because the world is not real and they are not a body is less than meaningless. It is denial of everything their world presently means to them. Before they are driven to seek for answers beyond their perception, they must experience the freedom the first level of forgiveness brings.

That being said, it is also true that every choice for forgiveness and truth made by anyone brings everyone closer to the awareness of it. Change is occurring at every “level” of our awareness. What is required to reach each of these levels and the form that will most effectively achieve it is something beyond our ability to comprehend, let alone try to achieve. That is the function of the Voice for Truth, the reason and purpose It exists in our one Mind. But it is helpful for us to know our part and trust there are others at every level that are doing the same—both consciously and unconsciously.

The changes in our world will come in many forms and frequently from unexpected places. Many will not be recognized for what they are. But all will contribute to “undoing” our need to make others wrong in order to hide our own guilt. There will be many reasons we find to work together that will eventually remind us of our Oneness. Many will be orchestrated in ways we may not recognize for what they are, but all will be healing our fear of joining in every form and at whatever level it exists.

Real forgiveness withdraws the judgment we have made of others. And as we let go of the reasons used to judge them, our self-judgments must also pass away. It is easy for us to be discouraged when we think we must be in charge of this happening and cannot figure out how to do it. It is also tempting to want to “educate” everyone else, thinking what they need to learn is what we have learned, and in the way we have learned it. The more quickly we get past that the more peaceful our own journey will be. But there is something we can do that will satisfy our need to help and also be a real help. We can recognize the one thing we all do have in common in our story of the world. We can recognize that everyone—like us— has the desire to be loved and the need to know we are capable of loving.