



Forgiveness: Sending Away Hate (And Offering Love)

The word "forgive" means "to send away." If we're to forgive others as God forgives us, then we have to send away what God sends away. One of the things God sends away is hate. In its place, He chooses to love.

We all know what hate looks like: isolation, shame, punishment. We've all experienced (and dished out) cold withdrawal, demeaning comments, and self-righteous retaliation. We're familiar with such hate-based actions. But sending away hate? That's not as familiar to us. It is, however, very familiar to God. He starts with Adam and Eve.

What Motivates Forgiveness?

Does an angry God cut Adam and Eve out of His heart when they sin? No. He doesn't. Instead, He approaches them. He asks questions that draw them out of the bushes, out of their lies, and into His presence. *Where are you? What is this you have done?* Instead of distancing from *them*, God distances from *hate*. Said another way, God forgives.

Adam and Eve's sin (though clearly seen and in no way condoned) can't cool down God's ardor for the two rebels. Even their blatant dismissal of Him doesn't alter His hunger for them to return His love. On page 16 of his book [Bold Love](#), Dan Allender captures God's heart when he tells us: "The driving motive behind forgiveness is the hope of restoration."

An Unexpected Sequence

Did you notice that God offers Adam and Eve His loving forgiveness *before* they show any signs of repentance? He forgives them while they're still resisting Him. Even as He watches them hide behind leaves, blame, and excuses, He longs to restore the intimacy they once shared.

*Offering forgiveness to the undeserving and unrepentant
is God's way to soften hearts.*

Forgiveness precedes repentance. The bible describes this sequence repeatedly:

- John 3:16 – *God so loved the world [i.e. the unrepentant] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* First forgiveness. Then repentance.
- Luke 15:11-32 – The prodigal son’s father (a picture of God the Father) humiliates himself and races to protect his scheming son from an angry community. The son is so shaken when he sees his father’s costly love that he (probably for the first time in years) loves his father back. First forgiveness. Then repentance.
- Jesus does the same. He suffers the cross to offer us protection from the death we deserve. First forgiveness. Then repentance – some completed, some yet to come.

God always demonstrates forgiveness by sending away hate and offering love. He longs for everyone to love Him back. Sometimes His longing is fulfilled – sometimes not. Is He still waiting for your response?

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