

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Sermon title: There's So Much More, Part 3: There's More to Forgiveness Than Just Saying "I Am Sorry," Genesis 45, Psalm 51, Colossians 3:12

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**INTRODUCTION:** I need to tell you this awful parrot joke. There was a lady who lived alone, and she was very lonely. She was tired of the silence, so she thought she'd buy a parrot. She wanted a parrot who could already talk. She didn't want to teach it how to talk. So, she went and bought one. There was something wrong with the parrot though. All he would do is insult her and peck her arm. So, she decided to teach him new words, but he would never learn.

One day, she reached into the cage, and he pecked her and said, "You're fat and ugly." So, she decided to teach him a lesson. She took him out and put the parrot in the freezer. For about 30 seconds, she heard all these terrible words and insults, and then there was silence.

And, she said, "Oh no! I've killed the parrot. I didn't mean to kill him." She opened it up and took him out.

And, the parrot said, "I'm so sorry. I'll never call you ugly names again. Please forgive me. I'm sorry." She said, "I forgive you" And, he said, "I just want to know what the chicken did."

There is more to forgiveness than just saying I'm sorry. I have three points I want you to hear this morning, and they are:

1. Sometimes actions take the place of words
2. Sometimes words take the place of action.
3. For a church to move forward, repentance and forgiveness must have both words and action.

**First, SOMETIMES ACTIONS TAKE THE PLACE OF WORDS.**

Sometimes they do. Joseph had many brothers. They became jealous when their father bought him a coat of many colors. Their jealousy grew to a point they conspired against him. And, they dug a big hole, threw their brother into the hole, and sold him as a slave to the Egyptians. They created a lie to tell others, so others wouldn't find out the evil they did against Joseph.

But, in time, Joseph went from being a slave to being second in command in Egypt. Joseph and his brothers had no contact for years. Then, there was a famine in the land where the brothers lived, and they were sent looking for food. They made an appeal to a ruler in Egypt, and they did not know the man they were talking to was their brother Joseph, until he could no longer contain himself and told them.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 45:1-15 <sup>1</sup>*Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers.* <sup>2</sup>*And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.*

<sup>3</sup>*Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.*

<sup>4</sup>*Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!”* <sup>5</sup>*And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.* <sup>6</sup>*For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping.* <sup>7</sup>*But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

<sup>8</sup>*“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.”* <sup>9</sup>*Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay.’* <sup>10</sup>*You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.* <sup>11</sup>*I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’*

<sup>12</sup>*“You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you.”* <sup>13</sup>*Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in*

*Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”*

*<sup>14</sup> Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.*

**EXPLANATION:** There are several observations I have from Genesis Chapter 45—from this tremendous story of forgiveness. There were no specific words, (“Forgive us” or “I forgive you”), but there were actions actually stronger from words. Here are some observations we can learn from:

- Joseph forgave his brothers even though none of them said, “I am sorry.” They did a terrible thing, but God used it for the good in the long run. Even though that did not excuse what they did. No words were exchanged—just hugs, weeping and kisses.
- They did not play the blame game. They did not bring up their own jealousy or the lies. There was no blame game.
- They did not make excuses. The brothers did not say: “It’s Dad’s fault. We got rid of you because you were his favorite.”
- They did not rehash the past. They didn’t get into what each other said or what was done. The Bible says, the brothers talked with him. Sounds like they just fellowshipped.

**APPLICATION:** Actions are very important. Saying “I’m sorry” and responding by forgiving are just words unless actions are with them. The blame game does not bring reconciliation. It was clear who was at fault, but Joseph overlooked it.

Perhaps you are in a similar situation. Be like Joseph. Be the stronger party and use Joseph as your example. Rehashing everything and dealing with technicalities rarely brings resolution to anything.

## **Second, SOMETIMES WORDS TAKE THE PLACE OF ACTION.**

I told you sometimes actions take the place of words, but sometimes words take the place of action—or they precede the action.

**ILLUSTRATION:** None of us are crazy about admitting when we are wrong. As a family, with my children, I taught them to rehearse saying, “I was wrong,” so it would be easier for them to say.

**APPLICATION:** We can show by actions we are sorry, and we can show by actions we forgive—as in the story of Joseph. But, I believe on most occasions, it’s best to say, “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.” And, I believe it’s best to say, “I forgive you.” The power of words is unmistakable. Words build up. Words tear down.

Words can also reconcile. The Bible tells us God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. For believers, he has given us an extra measure the world does not have—the ministry of reconciliation. Sometimes words needs to take the place or precede action.

**BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION:** A very good example of repentance using words is found in Psalm 51. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and when he was confronted about it, this is what came out. David said—

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 51:1-19 <sup>1</sup> *Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.*  
<sup>2</sup> *Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.*  
<sup>3</sup> *For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.*  
<sup>4</sup> *Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.*  
<sup>5</sup> *Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*  
<sup>6</sup> *Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*  
<sup>7</sup> *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

- <sup>8</sup> *Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Savior,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.*
- <sup>16</sup> *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*
- <sup>17</sup> *My sacrifice, O God, is<sup>[b]</sup> a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.*
- <sup>18</sup> *May it please you to prosper Zion,  
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,  
in burnt offerings offered whole;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

**EXPLANATION:** David had remorse for what he had done and for the results of his sin. And, he pleaded to God for forgiveness. And, later his actions showed he meant business with these words.

In Psalm 51, here are several truths I want to point out to you about David's verbal repentance:

- David did not justify what he'd done wrong. He repented without reservation. He held back nothing! He knew God knew everything.
- He wanted his sin blotted out, like something that could be removed from a man-made document.
- He wanted to be completely removed from his sin and restored to God.

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 103:12 [The Bible tells us:] <sup>12</sup> *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

**APPLICATION:** Forgiving someone takes effort. Asking for forgiveness takes effort. But, there are so many benefits to both. We all need to be forgiven, and we all need to give forgiveness.

**ILLUSTRATION:** The Mayo Clinic has published an article on the health benefits of forgiving someone. Here's what they found: Forgiving someone builds healthier relationships. It provides greater spiritual and psychological well-being. Forgiving someone leads to less anxiety, less stress, and less hostility. On the practical level, forgiving someone lowers blood pressure. The Mayo Clinic has the studies to prove these findings. Forgiving someone leads to fewer cases of depression. Forgiving someone lowers the risk of alcohol and drug abuse. There are both physical and spiritual benefits.

**APPLICATION:** How do I reach a state of forgiveness? Forgiveness is a commitment to a process of change. You might start with considering the value of forgiveness and its importance in your life. You might need to reflect on the facts of the situation—how it's affected your life, health, and sense of well-being. When you're ready (sooner rather than later)—actively choose to forgive the person who has offended you, whether or not they have asked and move away from your stance as a victim.

Many people do not seek forgiveness. They'd rather not admit they were wrong or have victimized you. Many people choose not to forgive. Holding a grudge is much more enjoyable than forgiving. It gives people something to hold on to—something to feed on—something to discuss with others. Some people are so trapped in the world of being a victim, they don't know the world outside of being a victim.

Victims, who won't let go, love to tell their story because they're the star of the story.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I was talking to a man, and he was telling me about someone who offended him. I gathered it must have been a long time ago, so I asked him what year it happened. He said, "1959." Most of his life has been lived holding a grudge!

**APPLICATION:** Can you truly forgive someone if someone is not sorry? If someone has not asked for forgiveness, don't go up to them and say, "I forgive you." Let the forgiveness be your own letting go, so you can have peace. Yes, you can forgive if the person is not sorry or no longer around.

Do it before you're looking at the person's face in a casket, so you can have peace for the rest of your life.

**Last, FOR A CHURCH TO MOVE FORWARD, REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS MUST HAVE BOTH WORDS AND ACTION.**

**SCRIPTURE:** Colossians 3:12-14 <sup>12</sup> *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.* <sup>13</sup> *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* <sup>14</sup> *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

**EXPLANATION:** In the scripture, we have Paul's exhortation to the Church at Colossae. For them to move forward as a Church, they needed both words and actions.

**APPLICATION:** Church members want the Church to grow. Church members want to reach new people. But, listen to me: Anything we attempt as a Church without taking care of real business—without taking care of each other—is nothing but a facelift. I want to be true to the Gospel.

My wife and I have come to love this church. I know Tusculum Hills has been through a lot. I know people are holding grudges. Can I ask you something? Please—for the sake of the Gospel—let it go.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Imagine people coming into Church with heavy baggage. Some people might have a knapsack. Some might not have any baggage. And, some might come with ten trunks of baggage. Let me make a request: Let's limit it to 2 bags.

**CONCLUSION:** Forgive, so you can be forgiven. The Bible says things bound on earth bind things in heaven. The release happens on earth. We are holding heaven captive to what God wants to do. So, for the sake of the Gospel, in as much love and compassion I can share with you, please let it go. And, if you can't let it go, the first step of recovery is admitting to God you can't let it go and asking him to help you.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Here is the best example of forgiveness on human level—I know what Jesus has done for us—but on the human level, listen to this story: When Susan and I lived in Texas, while I was attending seminary, we lived in a friendly neighborhood. This was the type of neighborhood where people walked in the evening and said hi to each other. We got to know a lady down the road named Elaine.

She was a fantastic Christian lady. She was very independent, and she had an acre and a half, which for the most part, she took care of it herself. Sometimes she would need help mowing the ditches or using the weed eater, so I would help her with this.

One day, I was using the weed eater, and I turned around and saw her running toward me with a look of terror,

She yelled “Stop! Stop! You just tore down all of my blackberry bushes!”

I felt terrible. I said, “Oh, I m so sorry. Please forgive.” I wanted to undo what had been done, but it couldn't happen.

I'll never forget the look of terror on her face. Later on in the summer, Elaine said, “I need to talk to you. I have something for you.” She was the organist at the church. After the service, I went to her, and she said, “Do you remember when you cut down all my bushes?” I said, “Yes.”

She said, “Well, some of them grew back, and I had just enough blackberries for one blackberry cobbler, and I want you to have it.

This was forgiveness—true forgiveness...no grudge...total joy as she smiled from ear to ear and handed me the blackberry cobbler. And, I ate it all.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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