

**INTRO**

- Why do you think Canadians say 'sorry' so often?
- Yes or No: Is it a true apology when someone says: "I'm sorry, but...."?

**READ**

Luke 23:32-39

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

Forgiveness is a universally accepted virtue. However, as CS Lewis notes, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."

**JESUS & FORGIVENESS**

Jesus taught a lot about forgiveness and expected his followers to practice forgiveness. In Mt 5:44 Jesus says, "Love your enemies and pray for the who persecute you." On the cross, Jesus is literally fulfilling his own teaching.

*Qu: What makes forgiveness hard for you? Who is harder to forgive: enemies or friends/family?*

**FORGIVENESS DOESN'T MEAN...**

Sometimes we struggle to forgive because we confuse forgiveness to mean:

- *Condoning* (justifying or accepting the offence)
- *Excusing* (absolving of responsibility)
- *Reconciling* (restoration of the relationship)
- *Forgetting* (minimizing/acting as if it never happened)

*Qu: Out of the above list, which one is most helpful to you to not confuse with forgiveness and why?*

Forgiveness is a process, not an event. Psychologists & Doctors affirm the health benefits of forgiveness. So why is forgiveness so hard?

**REAL FORGIVENESS IS COSTLY**

In banking terms, we talk about forgiving a debt. When we are wronged by someone they rob us of something valuable; a debt has been incurred. We can either make them suffer through revenge and retaliation or we can extend forgiveness. As you've likely experienced, forgiveness is a form of costly suffering but leads to a life free from unforgiveness, bitterness and cynicism. There is never true forgiveness without a cross to bear.

*Qu: If you are comfortable to do so, please share a time when you experienced the costly suffering of forgiving someone.*

**THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD**

The Cross is the great symbol of Christianity because it demonstrates God's love for us through his mercy and justice. God is able to extend forgiveness to each one of us because He satisfies His own justice by suffering through absorbing the debt of our sin.

Read Eph 5:32.

*Qu: what is the connection between us forgiving others and being forgiven by God? Why is this connection so vital in your attempts to forgive?*

True forgiveness is possible when we first grasp our need for and experience God's costly forgiveness towards us through Jesus. We gain a perspective on someone else's debt to us in light of our debt to God.

*Qu: Do you have a confidence right now that you are truly forgiven by God? Why/Why not?*

*Qu: Is there someone or a situation in your life that needs the hard work of forgiveness?*

**PRAY**

- Pray for those who identify a need to be forgiven as well as those who need God's grace to do the hard work of forgiveness.