

PSALM 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
2 Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!
3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.
5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;
6 my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
8 It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

1. What do you think it means to forgive someone? Is it forgetting what they've done, not caring what they've done, or something else?
2. Why does Psalm 130 say that, with the Lord, there is forgiveness? Why is God forgiving?
3. Read again the following story from Corrie Ten Boom. What stands out most for you?

"It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanced face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. 'How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein.' He said. 'To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!'

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity.

And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, **I** cannot forgive him. Give me **your** forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on **his**. When he tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."

MATTHEW 9

1And after getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came to his own town.

2And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3Then some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." 4But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Stand up, take your bed and go to your home." 7And he stood up and went to his home. 8When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

4. Why are Jesus' listeners offended that he forgives the sin of the paralytic man?
5. The passage speaks of the authority given not only to Jesus but to human beings who have been empowered by God to forgive. Do you find it strange to think of the ability to forgive as a kind of authority or power? What might that mean?
6. Do you think we need to figure others in our own strength or power, or does God help us in some way? How might he do that?
7. Activity. Draw a wavy line across the page. Around it, write people or experiences you need to forgive. Then draw a needle attached into the line at the end, and write 'Christ's forgiveness'. Reflect for a moment how Christopher wants to forgive the people that have wronged you through you, and - like a needle pulling thread through broken fabric - allows us to do repair and heal in a way we would not otherwise have the strength to do.