

Tearing Down the Wall through Forgiveness

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The Great Wall of China is the only man made structure visible from outer space. It is approximately 1500 miles long; averages 25 feet high and is up to 30 feet thick. This enormous structure was built little by little over several centuries.

Like the Great Wall of China, walls between people are constructed little by little; one brick at a time. There is typically a pattern in how the bricks are laid. Frequently, it begins with an offense. The offender may or may not be aware. The one who is offended often responds with an emotional reaction of fear, sadness, hurt, anger or disappointment. At times, the one who was offended avoids or emotionally withdraws from the offender. The offended also becomes an offender either unintentionally or intentionally. Thus, a brick is put in place. The cycle continues and gradually the wall is built, brick by brick. Since each one can only see their side of the wall, they blame the other for the strain in the relationship. It does not take long for an emotional wall to be built between two people that could rival the Great Wall of China.

Once the wall has been built, the only way for it to be torn down is through forgiveness. It is only by forgiving that true healing can begin. The thought of forgiving can be a real stumbling block. The difficulty is due, in part, to misconceptions of what forgiveness really means. Forgiveness means to pardon, to no longer blame, or be angry with someone who had offended you. Forgiveness is not the same as agreeing with the offender. It is not saying, "I agree with your actions that hurt me;" but rather forgiving is agreeing with God that we are all sinners and fall short of perfection. We all need a savior and all need forgiveness. Forgiving is not the same as trusting the offender. If one offends us greatly it does not necessarily mean that we will trust the offender immediately. However, forgiving is trusting in God, that He will set everything right, in His time. Forgiving is not the same as permitting the offender to continue doing you wrong. Forgiving is permitting God to heal the wounds.

The saying "time heals all wounds" is inaccurate. Time alone does not heal any relationship. It is forgiveness that heals. Through God we can forgive others because He first forgave us. God sits on His throne ready to forgive us and ready to help us forgive others. We do not need to do it alone. He is right there. God's intention for us to forgive is best described in Paul's letter to the Colossians. *Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

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