

FORGIVENESS

Definition

The intentional act of releasing someone from wrongdoing.

Story

It was 2005 in Long Island when a teenager decided to toss a 20-pound frozen turkey from a speeding car headlong into the windshield of another car driven by 44-year-old woman. She endured six hours of surgery using metal plates and other hardware to piece her face together, and learned she would still face years of therapy before returning to normal. She even was told she ought to feel lucky she didn't die or suffer permanent brain damage. Later, she learned that her assailant and his buddies had the turkey in the first place because they had stolen a credit card and gone on a senseless shopping spree just for kicks.

The district attorney said this is the sort of crime for which victims feel no punishment is harsh enough. "Death doesn't even satisfy them," he said.

The victim, Victoria Ruvolo, was more interested in salvaging the life of her 19-year-old assailant than in exacting any sort of revenge. She insisted on offering him a plea deal. He could serve six months in the county jail and be on probation for 5 years if he pleaded guilty to second-degree assault. Had he been convicted of first-degree assault, he could have served 25 years in prison, finally thrown back into society as a middle-aged man with no skills or prospects.

On the day of court, the young man carefully made his way to where Ruvolo sat in the courtroom and tearfully whispered an apology, "I'm so sorry for what I did to you." She then stood and embraced the young man. She patted his back as he sobbed, and said, "It's OK. I just want you to make your life the best it can be."

Quotes

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, but a constant attitude." *Martin Luther King Jr.*

"Forgiveness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me." *Unknown*

"Forgive. Because none of us are perfect." *Unknown*

Interaction

1. Who has offered you forgiveness and how did it make a difference in your life?
2. Who have you wronged and need to seek their forgiveness?
3. Who has wronged you and you need to love them unconditionally?

Main Idea

There comes a point in life when you realize you can't control the actions of other people. This also brings to light that your own actions are choices you make. Easy decisions are easy but not always best. One of the most difficult things in life to do is to forgive someone when they have offended and wronged you. But, it is also one of the greatest gifts you can give others because it changes the future.

Forgiveness recognizes wrongdoing. It confronts the wrongdoing in love. It looks for the best in another. It seeks to understand. It strengthens the relationship. It can be so powerful that it causes things to seem as if they never even happened.

Take Away

When you forgive you don't change the past, but you do change the future.