



# Family Values

## Virtue Realities

### Forgiveness I

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The Greek word that we translate into English as “*sin*” actually means “*missing the mark*.” No matter how hard we try, we continue to miss the mark when it comes to fulfilling God’s expectations of us or doing what’s right in His presence. We consistently fall short. We fail to do what is necessary for staying in a right relationship with God. Instead we remain separated and disconnected from God. Like Adam and Eve, our attempt to play God is doomed to failure. In the long run it makes us more aware of our inadequacies. A side effect is that we experience guilt and shame. Paul describes this human condition when he states in Rom. 3:23, “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

In essence this places all of us in the same predicament. No one of us can claim to be better than the other. We are in no position to lord it over each other. Nor do we have any basis to look down on another person or treat someone with disgust and disdain. There definitely is no room for self-righteousness or arrogance. We like all others have missed the mark, have failed the test, and have no leverage to demand special favors from God. Instead we are dependent on His goodness and mercy to right the wrong that we have created and to avoid God’s wrath.

Forgiveness is God taking the initiative to bridge the gulf. It is God closing the gap, and removing the obstacles that stand in the way of our relationship. It is God shooting a bull’s-eye on our behalf and crediting us with the score. Forgiveness is God choosing not to give us our just desserts, but rather to cancel our debt and to mark it “paid in full.” God covers up our wrongs and imperfections and in the words of Isaiah: “*you have cast all my sins behind your back.*” (Isaiah 38:17)

The primary connection in the Old Testament between God and His people is the covenant promise. This relationship takes on new shape and form when God becomes human, when the Word

becomes flesh. God comes to us on our level, takes on our human condition and reconnects us through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Christ embodies forgiveness. He gives His life, enters that place where he feels forsaken by God, so that we might have life and communion with God. He rights our wrongs, even though they were not of His making.

God’s forgiveness continues to come to us through common, every day elements. Water, bread, wine and the Word become vehicles of God’s grace. They are means through which we are energized through the Spirit. They open up doors to new possibilities. They are marks of our involvement in God’s community, the Body of Christ. As people forgiven by God, we are now in a position to forgive one another. (More on that in Forgiveness II.)

The following are ways to embrace God’s forgiveness:

1. **Renew your baptism daily.** Consider how you have been washed with the water of life. As Paul tells us in Rom. 6:4 - “*Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*”
2. **Relish the fact that you are special in God’s eyes.** You are forgiven even though you do not deserve it. Show gratitude for God’s grace.
3. **Know your place.** Keep from looking down your nose at anyone. Appreciate how your sinful condition is a leveler that links you with the human race.
4. **Take advantage of God’s means.** Explore the Word. Come to God in prayer. Partake of Christ’s presence through the meal we celebrate together.
5. **Declare your connection.** Let the world know whose you are and what it means to be forgiven.

**Affirmation:** *I know I count with God. I am forgiven.*

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