

## Henry Williams - Forgiveness case study

I don't generally hold grudges. In the past 8 years of working with my church I haven't had many conflicts with other people; however I can think of one instance that rubbed me the wrong way. There's a brother in our church who probably falls into the heavy narcissist category. He's someone that I spent a lot of time with over the years, and who I've had multiple fallings out with. In a community that strives to support the people around it, I find this self-serving attitude to be frustrating. The incident that really stuck with me wasn't an incident over his personality, or his desire to shine, through stepping on others (metaphorically of course), our differences seem to come out the most when we're playing games.

The incident that stuck with me came about many years ago when we were playing ping-pong after service one Sunday (yes, I really don't have a lot of examples for this case study). I was on a winning streak, and he was getting frustrated. He ended up yelling at me "I make six figures, what are you?" and I still remember it surprised me how offended I was at that. I have never earned a lot of income, so I don't think of myself as having a lot of pride surrounding my finances, but this really stuck with me for some reason. I thought of a retort that night when I was in the shower, but at this point, I'm glad that I was unable to come up with it on the spot, I don't think it would have been wise, and it would have caused more issue in the long run.

This happened many years ago, and for some reason, it has really stuck with me. "We usually define forgiveness as reducing or eliminating resentment and motivations toward revenge"<sup>1</sup>, I had originally decided to try to reduce the animosity felt toward this brother, after he had left our church. However, recently he has returned, which has made me realize that I probably still hold onto this moment more than I should. I don't feel a need to get back at this

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<sup>1</sup> Worthington Jr., Everett L. "The New Science of Forgiveness." Greater Good Magazine, no. 9 (2005): 2.

brother, however, I honestly don't feel a desire to be close to him either. I would say that I'm in the process of forgiving, but I'm not sure how that interacts with maintaining healthy boundaries in this relationship.

Looking inwardly, I recognize that I do have an angry streak. I do my best to control it, but it does show face in unexpected ways. I've never made a lot of money, and never had any pride around my income, but for some reason his words really hurt. This incident isn't something I think about regularly, but it has enough of a lingering effect that I don't actively seek out time with this brother. I can greet him warmly, have small talk with him, but I can't say that I enjoy his company.

I'm sure that this is an incident that this brother doesn't remember, but I've let it color my relationship with him. The other people from the group we had have all moved on to new places, and our relationship just naturally grew more distant. I'm sure he doesn't think about me very often. I've realized while writing this case study, that I've been aware of my own response to him, and honestly, just didn't care enough to try to fix our relationship. I didn't do anything wrong in the moment, but I did let it get under my skin and fester. I don't know if I'll approach him with all of this. However I am going to try to let go of this. I'll also try to see if I notice any of the physical benefits mentioned in the articles we read for class.

Bibliography

Worthington Jr., Everett L. "The New Science of Forgiveness." Greater Good Magazine, no. 9  
(2005)