

Forgiveness - is it a human strength or a weakness?

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To forgive, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means to cease to feel angry or resentful towards. Forgive, according to Roget's Thesaurus, can also mean pardon, absolve, give absolution, amnesty, remit, reprieve, respite or purge.

I have often found that forgiveness can be a quality I lack. When wronged, my gut reaction is to either reject or harm the person or group who has wronged me.

So when I hear stories of children who were victims of abuse forgiving their abusers, women who were victims of rape forgiving their rapists or families who were victims of a holocaust forgiving their oppressors, I am deeply puzzled.

Why would you forgive an act of such ugliness and horror? How could you ever recover what was stolen from you? Where could you find the strength to be honourable to those who have no honour?

My guess is the only way for these people to find peace is through forgiveness. If they didn't forgive, they'd be consumed with anger and hate.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Love is the strongest force the world possesses, and yet it is the humblest imaginable."

Perhaps my inability to forgive comes from a lack of humility. To be humble can mean to be lowly, modest or meek.

Which makes me ask why I must lower myself to find inner peace? If you once took away all my power and pride, why must I now give you what power and pride I have?

In Timothy Findley's play, Elizabeth Rex, William Shakespeare asks Queen Elizabeth I, "If God can be merciful, why not the Queen?"

Mercy and humility are both god-like qualities. Is the act of forgiveness an act that brings us closer to the divine? Or is it an act that makes one become submissive?

Do I lose my passion, energy, drive and motivation if I submit and forgive? Am I diminishing or regenerating myself through forgiveness? Does forgiving restore my sense of purpose and direction or does it make it ill-defined?

I do not know and this frustratingly is my moral dilemma.