

# Forgiveness and Repentance

Rev James Laning

**Hi Rev. Laning,**

The question that I have is in regard to forgiveness. It seems that there are different ideas with respect to the part of repentance and its place in forgiveness. We know that we are called to forgive the brother as much as seventy times seven, but when do we properly forgive? ([Luke 17:3-4](#)).

Craig Poortinga, Loveland PRC

**Dear Craig,**

I very much appreciate your question, and would like to begin by quoting the passage to which you refer:

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him ([Luke 17:3, 4](#)).

In this passage our Lord instructs us that we must forgive our brother in Christ repeatedly, even if he comes to us seven times in a day and tells us that he repents.

We also see here that we are to express this forgiveness to a person in the way of his or her repentance. We are not to tell the impenitent that they are forgiven. But in the way of his repenting and asking us to forgive him, we must truly forgive him from the heart, and must not bear any grudge against him. This is very important to remember in our marriages, in our relation between parents and children, and in our dealings with one another.

Now what if a person has sinned against us and has not yet shown any sign of repentance? In such a case we are called to strive to bring that person to repentance, so that we can express to him our forgiveness, and thus bring about reconciliation. It is true that the person who has sinned should be the one to come to the person whom he has sinned against. But if he does not do this, the brother who has been sinned against must go to the sinning brother and try to bring him to repentance, following the instruction of our Savior set forth in [Matthew 18](#).

To do this we must keep in mind how God brought us to repentance, and then assured us that all our sins are forgiven. Although we are not forgiven *on the basis of* our repentance, it is *in the way of* our repentance and faith that God causes us consciously to experience the comfort of forgiveness. Thinking on how much God has forgiven us, and the way in which He has caused us to experience this forgiveness, we are to imitate Him in our forgiving of one another.

God's continued blessings upon you and the saints in Loveland.

Originally Published in:

Vol 64 No 11 December 2005