

On forgiveness and moving on

By [Simon Cozens](#)

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A generally excellent sermon I heard on Sunday (sadly not on th'Interweb yet) made an interesting point that stuck with me, quoting from Colossians 3:13

("Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another"). The preacher said that forgiveness deals with the problem; bearing with one another is what you do until the problem is dealt with.

And that makes a lot of sense. God did not merely move on from the problem of sin, or sweep it under the carpet, or pretend it wasn't really a problem any more. He did something about it, something painful and costly which dealt with the problem. Forgiveness has a point of resolution to it.

Now consider a situation where one person declares to others that they need to "forgive and move on" - forgive *him* and move on, that is.

If the above understanding of forgiveness is right, then I wonder if such an attitude actually *denies*

others the opportunity to exercise forgiveness, because it shuts down avenues for dealing with the problem. Instead, it communicates, "I don't want us to be talking about this any more. Your thoughts and feelings on the situation are now your problem, not *our* problem. Can talk about something else instead?" In that sense, "you need to forgive me" is almost a non-apology apology: "I'm sorry that you feel that way." (Subtext: get over it.)

So what they want is the "move on", but they're throwing the "forgive" in there so it sounds a bit more Christian.

I remember my pastor in Japan pointing out that forgiveness always brings restored relationships. That was the difference between Judas and Peter - both betrayed Jesus, but Peter's acceptance of forgiveness lead to a restored relationship. How can there be a restored relationship if there is no opportunity to fix a problem; how then can there be forgiveness?

I suspect there are a lot of people out there who are having to be very, very good at "bearing with one another," because they've never really had the chance to "forgive whatever grievances you may have."

Originally posted [at Simon Cozens's blog](#).