
Kluwer Mediation Blog

Moments of Forgiveness

Greg Bond (Bond & Bond Mediation / University of Wildau) · Saturday, December 24th, 2016

I doubt if there is anybody who has reached a certain age who has never wished for forgiveness from another person. That certain age is certainly not high. Forgiveness from school friends, family members, spouses and partners, colleagues, bosses, subordinates, and complete strangers. Forgiveness for a wrong word, a heated moment, not listening, a lack of attention, dishonesty, a lack of understanding, deep hurt physical and emotional, material damage, serious misdemeanour.

Sounds familiar?

Do you remember the first time you felt this way? The first I remember dates back to my elementary school days, when I deliberately humiliated a friend to make myself look bigger in the eyes of our peers. I was ashamed.

When did you last forgive someone? When did you last know that you should forgive someone and yet did not do so? Was there some grudge still preventing you from making that generous and cleansing gesture? It was not yet possible to do so from the heart.

To all the mediators reading this: how often have you mediated with parties who wanted an apology from the other side? Who wanted that apology more than anything else? How often have you mediated with parties who wanted to give an apology, perhaps even before it was asked for? This year, I mediated a conflict between students supporting different sides of the Syrian war, who felt insulted and threatened by each other through their actions on a European university campus. The agenda was not reconciling political difference; it was about giving and accepting apologies for the hurtful ways in which they had expressed their differences.

A friend of mine told me about a recent case in court, in which a claim was brought against a youth for allegedly threatening a man with a stick, club, or baseball bat. There was a dispute as to what this object actually was, as the youth said it was just his fishing rod. A racist comment had apparently been made. The judge asked the two young men if they might consider mediation – a simple form of victim-offender mediation before it was even clear if any culpable action had taken place. The mediator asked each separately if they would accept or give an apology. They then met together. The youth said sorry and the man who had felt threatened accepted. The claim, which would have gone nowhere before the court, was dropped.

This month a colleague told me how three years ago he had changed his lifestyle after a medical scare. He had lost weight, stopped drinking alcohol, and had brought his blood pressure down. He had stopped believing he was right in everything he did, stopped fighting to get his own way at

work. He could now see that his peers and superiors often had a point. For these three years, he had hardly spoken to his former boss after they had parted in conflict. But just a few days ago he had approached him and apologised for getting things wrong years ago.

You may have guessed that this is my Christmas Eve blog. According to the bible, “the man Christ Jesus” is a “mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy, 2:5). His message was a rich message of forgiveness. “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

I was at a funeral recently, in a village cemetery. The land is elevated, with views across fields and forests. It is a beautiful spot. The priest said: “If the deceased was in your debt, now is the time to forgive, and if you were in his debt, now is the time to ask for forgiveness.” The words were carried by the wind.


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The graphic features a black background with white text and a circular icon. The icon depicts a group of stylized human figures, with one figure in the center being magnified by a magnifying glass. The background is accented with horizontal lines in blue and green.

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