

No
APOLOGY
NEEDED

LEARNING TO FORGIVE AS GOD DOES

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NATHAN BYRD



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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Boldface type in the Scripture quotations indicates the author’s emphasis.

YHWH refers to the most holy name of God, as written in ancient Hebrew.

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Learning to Forgive as God Does

Nathan R. Byrd
Jesus Makes the Difference Ministries, Inc.
P.O. Box 8102
Greenwich, CT 06836
www.JesusMakesTheDifference.com

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PART ONE:

REDISCOVERING JEWISH RHYTHMS OF FORGIVENESS

YOM KIPPUR AND THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

There are certain moments in your life that feel like an earthquake. The initial tremor alone jolts you off your feet!

My “second call” to ministry began with one of those moments. On a frigid winter night in January 2002, Dr. Morgan, a Messianic Jew, walked into a black Baptist church. He nonchalantly looked around and did not seem fazed by the small attendance. Later, I invited him into my office and we began some introductory small talk.

I apologized for the low attendance due to the weather, saying I felt sorry he had made the trip in vain. Standing in my office, he had no way of knowing that I was in my last year of pastoring—period. After three years of grinding away as a senior pastor, I was ready to leave all the church drama behind. I was having trouble enrolling the congregation in my vision for a multi-ethnic,

non-denominational church community. Thus, his response to my apology shocked me.

“What if I’m not here for them? What if I’m here for you?”

At that very moment, I realized I was about to have an encounter with destiny.

Dr. Morgan then explained the difference between a Christian who understands the Jewish roots of their faith and one who does not. Every point he made had a drastic effect on my overall theology and shaped my ideas about forgiveness.

After that evening, Dr. Morgan and I began to meet regularly. He showed me the Hebraic basis of our Christian faith and how to interpret Scripture in light of that perspective. For about two years, Dr. Morgan mentored me. It is due to his worldview that I describe my current ministry, The Worship Center, as a Judeo-Christian ministry.

About a decade after I met Dr. Morgan, while running The Worship Center, I felt called to fast for a week. To be honest, I didn’t really know what I was doing. I just knew God wanted me to focus on Him. That week turned out to be life-changing in more ways than I could have imagined.

YOM KIPPUR IS ALL ABOUT FORGIVENESS FROM GOD AND RESTORATION.

I had four conversations about forgiveness and reconciliation during my week of fasting. By the time Saturday night rolled around, it dawned on me that the previous Wednesday was Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. I was preparing for my sermon for the following morning when this revelation hit me, so I

switched topics and prepared a message about Yom Kippur. Even so, I lamented. Despite all my meetings with Dr. Morgan, I had once again missed an opportunity to celebrate Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is all about forgiveness—from God, for Israel. It's all about restoration. The matter of forgiveness and how it is introduced in the Scriptures should be a primary matter in our churches. Yom Kippur, in many ways, is about recognition—of our sins against God and others—and that recognition directly impacts how we practice our faith.

That Sunday in September 2012, I started teaching a four-part series on Yom Kippur and the concepts of forgiveness and unforgiveness. It was as much for me as it was for the congregation. Within the context of my study and teaching, God began to give me a revelation about forgiveness, and it was one I had never heard during my forty-plus years of salvation. What God revealed was revolutionary to me and to those at The Worship Center. Many of us were convicted and challenged on the spot to reevaluate our views of forgiveness.

As the clarity of the revelation began to formulate in my mind, the first thing I realized was that this particular issue has been the enemy's main tool in destroying the unity and community of the church. Once he is able to distort a relationship in this area—and he does it often and effectively—he can collapse the potential of any couple, family, church, society, or nation. This particular issue has catastrophic results whether you are Christian or not—and whether you are religious or not. If we are not conscious of forgiveness, we become low-hanging fruit for the enemy and he picks us off at will.

Many books have been written on the subject of forgiveness from various theological viewpoints and I do not write this book to replace or undermine any of them. Instead, I hope this book will complement them and the matter of forgiveness may take on even greater significance for the church and body of Christ. So as

you embark on this journey to comprehend, appreciate, and apply forgiveness, may the Holy Spirit be available to you. I hope you will reap the full benefits of forgiveness in your life and walk in its power.