

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

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Forgiveness and healthy living

Forgiveness is an essential part of healthy living. Without forgiveness the victim can become bitter and the offenders uncaring. You may be led to believe that forgiveness is a bad thing, as it lets people off the hook too easily. What do we want from our justice system?

I welcomed news that the Home Secretary now understands prison does not work, as too many people are reoffending and first time prisoners included. Prison seems to be a school for offending rather than a place for reformation. Both offender and offended benefit if those who break the law realize that life might be better if they respect the law.

Where does forgiveness come in? I would suggest that it comes in when society says, "Despite what you have done you are part of the community and we want you back." Whilst the offender says, "I want to come back as part of the community and I am sorry that I offended."

There is an old story of a father who let his son spend his inheritance in a bad way, but welcomed him back as his son rather than as "a hired servant". In that story, it was the offended father who made the move to restore the relationship. Are there situations where we need to restore relationships? It may not be easy for us, but perhaps we can help create a better society by forgiving rather than trying to demand our pound of flesh.

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