

# Forgiveness Friday #9

5 November 2021

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Last weekend I listened to a [sermon by Bill Johnson](#), Senior Pastor of Bethel Church, Redding, on the renewed mind, in which Ps Bill talks about how he resists being ensnared by offence. I was immediately interested because a few years back my prayer buddy and I read John Bevere's book, [The Bait of Satan: Living Free from the Deadly Trap of Offence](#).

(John Bevere's book is now up to its 10th anniversary edition. With the wisdom of hindsight, we can see now that it was first published just as social media was about to catapult us into the Age of Offence.)

In his sermon, Bill Johnson makes some very insightful remarks about how offence can be masked by the appearance of reason and wisdom. He goes on to share that when he finds himself taking offence he prays, "I give up my right to be offended". That brought to mind a definition of forgiveness I once read, that to forgive is to give up the right to punish.

I began to ponder offence. Does offence warrant forgiveness? I would say, for me, most definitely yes! If I need to exercise forgiveness to get over my bad-tempered response to inconsiderate drivers, then taking offence must fall well within the fence line of the forgiveness ballpark.

I decided to experiment. That was difficult at first, because I could not recall a recent case of offence taking. Then I realised that I often take offence at things I read as part of my day's work, even several times a day. For example, over the last few weeks any fly so unfortunate as to have been on my office wall would have heard any number of opinions on the French President's response to Australia's cancellation of its multi-billion-dollar submarine contract with France. Some of those opinions even included some well-chosen French expressions until I decided I could make further protest by using Italian phrases instead.

But this kind of offence is not deeply personal, so does it warrant forgiveness, I wondered? I concluded that, yes, it does. It is not only my sense of hurt that signals the need for forgiveness, it is my lack of peace.

Lack of peace is always personal. Absence of peace is a red flag that signals that somewhere we need a change of heart, a change of mind, or a shift in perspective to ensure we're close enough to catch God's thoughts.

I also discovered that it is far easier to give a blessing than it is to give up a right. I found that affirming I did not want to take offence a very useful tool to prepare the ground to plant a blessing but on its own it was not enough to sustain change. And I also sensed a danger. Do we really have a *right* to take offence?

Giving up something we consider to be our right sounds like a sacrifice that, if we're not careful, could leave us with a twinge of regret even if we succeed in letting go. Blessings, on the other hand, are transformative and never leave a sour after-taste.

With blessings, there are no regrets. And just to prove I am no longer offended by President Macron, let me affirm that in French: *Rien, je ne regrette rien!* (Click on the illustration to hear Edith Piaf sing it out in her unmistakable voice.)

Love, Lyndal

PS Printable pdfs of each week's letter are posted [here](#).