

God's Role in Offender Accountability

God offers forgiveness and His grace covers those who offend when they acknowledge their inappropriate behavior, repent and dedicate themselves to positive change (Romans 3:22-23; 2 Peter 3:9). It's very important to understand God's love, grace and forgiveness for believers. We have all offended someone at one time or the other. There are times we may not have even realized it. God's grace covers us if we believe, correct the course and strive to be Christlike. The course is often winding and bumpy with potholes and many obstacles. But we are made righteous through Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

Paul in his letter to the Romans tells us: "We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." Romans 3:22-24

God also holds responsible those who relentlessly inflict senseless pain on others without remorse or repentance. It's very important to understand God's love, grace and forgiveness for believers. If we offer our situation to God and he will give us the necessary courage and strength to forgive and will address grave unrepentant offenses in our behalf. The verses below that address the "guilty" refer to those who are plotters and disseminators of evil without remorse (Nahum 9-11).

We are assigned the tough job of praying for the offender and placing the situation in God's hands. Luke 6:27 says "Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." These prayers and actions are not always easy but God is by our side, the source of our strength. We have the difficult job of forgiving others so we can model God's forgiveness, receive His forgiveness, and move forward (Mark 11: 25-26). This does not mean we avoid setting appropriate boundaries or holding the offending party accountable. Remember, forgiveness does not require reconciliation or forgetting the offenses.

Pray for the strength and will to forgive. Let God take control of the situation (Romans 12:19). When we are treated in a malevolent or hurtful manner, God tells us to take the high road and respond with honor (Romans 12:17). Even if we hold those who offend accountable in an honorable way, they are ultimately accountable to him.

The following are scriptures regarding God's response to those who continually mistreat others and remain unrepentant. Abusive mistreatment may be emotional, physical and/or sexual. All verses below are from the New Living Translation bible.

*Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord.
Romans 12:19*

In his justice he will pay back those who persecute you. And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Romans 12:17

The Lord is slow to anger and filled with unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. Numbers 14:18

The Lord is slow to get angry, but his power is great and he never lets the guilty go unpunished. Naham 1:3