



The Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace

L. Gregory Jones , Célestin Musekura

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Christians are supposed to forgive others as we've been forgiven. But hearing the call to forgive is different from knowing how to practice forgiveness at home and in the world. Forgiveness is about more than the isolated acts and words of individuals. To forgive and be forgiven, we need communal practices and disciplines for a way of life that makes for peace. Greg Jones and Celestin Musekura describe how churches and communities can cultivate the habits that make forgiveness possible on a daily basis. Following the Rwandan genocide, Musekura lost his father and other family members to revenge killings. But then he heard God tell him to forgive the killers. The healing power of forgiveness in his own life inspired him to work for forgiveness and reconciliation across Africa. Jones, author of *Embodying Forgiveness*, interacts with Musekura's story to show how people can practice forgiveness not only in dramatic situations like genocide but also in everyday circumstances of marriage, family and congregational life. Together they demonstrate that forgiving and being forgiven are mutually reciprocating practices that lead to transformation and healing."

The Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace Details

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Pete Kersker says

This co-authored book alternates chapters between the writers. Each comes from a different background and culture, yet both have excellent insights into the forgiveness and reconciliation process.

Jeremiah Bookworm says

This book is co-authored by Celestin Musekura, a Rwandan pastor and founder of ALARM (African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries), and L. Gregory Jones, vice president and vice provost for global strategy and programs at Duke University in Durham, NC. It is part of a series called "Resources for Reconciliation", which features theologians in conjunction with "on-the-ground practitioners"; in this work, Musekura, who lost family members in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, represents the practitioner, while Jones, with a background at Duke Divinity School, represents the theologian. I selected this book mainly for the sections written by Musekura, which were by far the most enlightening. Musekura could have easily authored this book by himself; Jones's sections added little to the value of the book.

Ben Zajdel says

This book would be powerful on its own, but the fact that one of the authors hails from Rwanda lends it even more credence. Musekura was not in Rwanda when the genocide of 1994 occurred, but most of his family was. Since then, he has come to work with many of those who organized the murders of his loved ones. Musekura left a well-paying job to work for the reconciliation of his country.

The authors start with a premise that seems simple, but is so hard for us to understand: forgiveness is not something we can do on our own. It has to be enabled by God. There is an interesting chapter titled "The Dance of Forgiveness" in which Jones lays out the awkward steps of forgiveness which much be rehearsed over and over again before we are able to practice them daily in a forgiving community.

The other focus is on the transforming power of Christ in the work of forgiveness. The authors emphatically point out that forgiveness involves the heart, mind and actions. The book concludes with a discussion of Christian communities that have embraced forgiveness. There is also a study guide included.

Karen says

I was really disappointed by this book. I was looking for a book on the steps to achieve forgiveness and this was not it. The book is too mired with Episcopal rhetoric. I wanted a book I could recommend to my clients, but this was not it.

John says

Great advice, given in the context of someone (Celestin Musekura) who knows that of which he speaks. I appreciate the rootedness of this book, that it isn't just theory, but that it is clear how the principles of forgiveness have worked themselves out practically in the lives of all kinds of people--especially in the midst of conflict in central Africa. Jones' two chapters provide helpful practical advice, defining what forgiveness looks like in six steps, and also talking about the connection between forgiveness and memory. In the latter case, I appreciated the way Jones points us toward remembering well, taking those old memories and putting them in a different context than the anger or shame that has plagued us over the years.

Bob says

Celestin Musekura is co-author of this book with L. Gregory Jones and it is Musekura's contribution that makes this book so outstanding. Musekura is a Rwandan who lost family members in the genocide and whose mother is now cared for by a tribal member whose family members killed others in Musekura's family. The story of how Musekura struggled with and practiced and taught forgiveness is compelling and underscores the radical power of the gospel to heal deep divisions and wounds not only between individuals but between warring communities.

Laura says

This is an incredible book that shows forgiveness at the heart of Christianity. Because the Lord has forgiven us of all our sins, we must forgive others who have sinned against us, both individually and communally. One of the authors, Celestin Musekura, lost several family members in the Rwandan genocide of the 1990's. He has a unique perspective on the necessity of being communities that forgive rather than continue to live as separate warring tribes. While the forgiveness I must seek and grant has nothing to do with genocide, As Celestin has said, America has more tribes than Africa. For example, I care a lot about the black lives matter movement and also public education. It would be easy for me to foster animosity toward those who are not in those tribes with me.

The book is short and easy to read. I chose to read 5 or 6 pages a day and then I also read one of the Bible passages mentioned in the section I read. That method helped me really absorb the message so that it hopefully it will stay in my heart after the book goes back on the shelf. I recommend this book to anyone who cares about having peace and making peace.

Kyle Reschke says

Celestin has become a good friend in the last year. I am inspired by his work, life, approach to reconciliation, and all that is organization ALARM is doing around the world.
