

enough to voice his humble confession of sin in the hearing of those he has offended.

Of course, there is need for caution that such a session does not degenerate into a "can you top this" performance. Participants should be encouraged to confess only those sins that have caused or contributed to the present conflict.

c. Forgiveness

Confession of faults can stir up deeper feelings of resentment if there is not true repentance on the part of all offenders and a spirit of forgiveness. Eph. 4:31ff. speaks clearly to the situation.

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.⁷

Without real forgiveness, the bitterness, rage, and anger, etc. would not be put away for very long. Forgiveness means that the person will be henceforth treated as if the incident had not occurred. Thomas Watson expresses this in a quaint way when he says: "God not only makes a show of forgiveness, and keeps our sins by him; but he really forgives, he passes an act of oblivion."⁸ He refers to Jer. 31:34, the last part of which assures, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Thus, if we forgive as God forgives, we forget.

⁷See also Matt. 5:44; Mark 11:25; Col. 3:13.

⁸Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity, (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers,) p. 584.