

# Revenge is sweet...

by Richard Fowler

## **B**ut forgiveness is sweeter... and healthier for us.

We have all experienced, I'm sure, the kind of satisfaction that comes from indulging in a bit of one-upmanship by getting your own back after you have been wronged. After all, didn't they deserve it?

Maybe they did, but before your *nucleus accumbens* (part of the brain linked to the feeling of satisfaction) gets fired up by the feelings created by the act of revenge, press pause, and remember that there is something sweeter on offer.

In a recent *New Scientist* article, it was suggested that forgiveness may be a better option for you. After all, the consequences of revenge can sometimes get out of hand: with findings showing revenge as a causal factor for up to 20% of homicides worldwide each year,<sup>1</sup> so we might have to agree. But why do humans forgive in the first place?

Well, the article goes on to postulate something quite curious. According to Graham Lewton, the article's author, the reason that humans forgive is because of "an instinctive cognitive trait that evolved to lubricate our often-fraught social interactions".<sup>2</sup>

So, forgiveness is part of an instinctive cognitive tool-kit that has evolved to cool social disconnection? Really? Well, can we have a little more evolution, please (said with some satire)!

Sometimes I do have to smile when reading about alleged antecedents that apparently give evolutionary rise to *homo sapiens'*

most complex psychological functioning. Quite frankly, I don't know whether there is anything instinctive about forgiveness. But I can tell you that you may live longer if you practise unconditional forgiveness a little more.<sup>3</sup>

Unconditional! Now there's a word. And a word that leads you and me to the real reason why we should forgive, and why forgiveness could be easier.

When we learn to forgive, it has incredible ability to change you and the offender (if you want to read about how one woman forgave and befriended her brother's killer, read this<sup>4</sup>). Yes, it can help us live healthier and longer. But there's a greater instinct and reason for why we forgive others. And this is it:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>5</sup>

Forgiveness can come from us because we too have also been unconditionally forgiven by Jesus, when he gave his life for us by dying on the cross so that our sins can be forgiven. In fact, this truth makes it easier to forgive. If we have done wrong, then it is easier to understand when other people wrong us. If we need forgiveness from God, let us also freely forgive others.

Simply put, forgiveness is the great leveller. It brings us all to the same place. I hope to see you there.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23631561-100-effortless-thinking-it-pays-to-resist-revenges-sweet-taste/>
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/forgiveness-health-benefits\\_n\\_6029736](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/forgiveness-health-benefits_n_6029736)
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/my\\_brothers\\_killer\\_is\\_now\\_my\\_friend](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/my_brothers_killer_is_now_my_friend)
- <sup>5</sup> Colossians 3:13.



*But, forgiveness is sweeter...and healthier for us, too.*