



## Season 13: Episode 1 | Amy Orr-Ewing | How Can We Learn to Forgive?

Hello and welcome to Scripture Untangled, a podcast by the Canadian Bible Society. My name is Joanna la Fleur. I'm a friend of the Canadian Bible Society and I'm going to be your guide for today's episode.

Today, Amy Orr-Ewing will be interviewed by Lorna Dueck. Dr. Amy Orr-Ewing is an international author, speaker, and theologian who addresses the deep questions of our day with meaningful answers found in the Christian faith. She's the author of multiple books, including *Where is God in All the Suffering?* and best-selling book *Why Trust the Bible?* Over the last 25 years, Amy has given talks and answered questions on university campuses around the world.

She's also addressed politicians in the UK Parliament as well as at the White House. She regularly responds to invitations to speak at banks, businesses, and consultancy firms, as well as churches, conferences, and media events all over the world. Amy holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Oxford and previously served as president of the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics.

She's now honorary lecturer at the School of Divinity, University of Aberdeen, distinguished scholar at Wheaton College, Illinois, and theologian in residence at St. Church in Hackney, London. Enjoy this rich conversation between Amy and Lorna.

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**Lorna Dueck:** Hello, Amy. It's wonderful to have you back on the podcast, and you've brought us a well-being book. I'm going to call it that.

I think your book on forgiveness, while you write about this, you use the German word, Lüften - to let some fresh air into the house. Are you asking us to unlock our soul window and let some air in to refresh us?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Absolutely, yeah. Thank you so much, Lorna, and thank you for having me back on the podcast.

What a joy to be with you today. Yeah, I mean, this book brings to mind that image. I have German grandparents, and they would always open many windows in the house every day to create that draft, that through flow of air, I guess, in the pre-aircon age.

And it feels to me like there's real spiritual beauty and power in the practice of forgiveness. But unfortunately, because so many of us have experienced it negatively, either in the church or just in Christian community, it can be a thing that we don't want to talk about or that we sort of avoid.

**Lorna Dueck:** Because this is not a happy, clappy approach that you are writing about.

It's a powerful book. I could hardly put it down. And you take us through layers of work, through science, through Scripture, you take us through victim realities, your own life-threatening experiences.

So, this is a deeply personal book for you. Can you tell us some of your own backstory? Tell us what happened in your life that made forgiveness so deeply personal?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah. So, I've been married for 28 years.

I had to double, I had to think for a moment that, you know, when it's been a long time, you think, how's another year passed? Been married for 28 years. And my

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husband is a survivor of child abuse in his early childhood and a bit later on as well. So, he has, you know, had to really sort of suffer through what people know as complex PTSD.

And so, when you're kind of married to someone who's experienced egregious moral injury, you know, you think differently, I think, about the moral categories and think deeply about what forgiveness means. And he's amazing, you know, has forgiven and continues to forgive those who've harmed him greatly. And so that's been a kind of part of the texture of my life.

And then I experienced a really profound kind of trauma and moral injury myself about six years ago. And through the process of receiving therapy and trauma support, I found it quite difficult to hear about and think about forgiveness. It felt like, you know, you were sort of being rushed into something that wasn't quite where I was at.

But obviously, as a follower of Jesus, you know, I want to be obedient to Scripture. I want to live faithful to the Lord. So, it was a real wrestle to begin to think about, you know, what is forgiveness? How do we practice it? What does the Bible actually say? How do we live in faithfulness to Scripture? And then as part of my work now, I advocate for survivors of abuse, including sexual abuse.

And for so many of them, the sort of weaponizing of forgiveness against them to protect the perpetrator is a part of their story. And so I really wanted to think about that and think about how, as Christians, we can do that deeper theological work to bring back the practice of forgiveness, because as a consequence, it's almost like it's become something we don't really talk about in the church, because no one wants to harm someone. And cheap grace has been all around us.

But how do we then reintegrate this very important central Biblical theme? So, the book was really born out of that deeper theological study, personal experience. And

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then just lastly, and then I'll let you ask another question. I work in public theology and apologetics.

And in the last sort of six, seven years with the rise of identity politics on the left, and then the rise of kind of aggression and cruelty culture on the right. Politically, you know, the people that we're trying to reach are just filled with rage. There's this sense of grievance and victimhood, propelling young people into the world.

And thinking about how Christian forgiveness uniquely and profoundly speaks into our cultural moment.

So, the book is engaging in a conversation about forgiveness on all of these levels from kind of trauma to personal experience to Biblical textual engagement, to kind of more like national conversations that are happening about what it means to live in our cultural moment.

**Lorna Dueck:** Well, so many of your chapters are on the deep personal side of harm.

And I hear it loud and clear in your writing; we must as individuals face the harm that was done. Yeah. What does the proper acknowledgement of harm look like?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah, thank you.

I mean, I feel like that is such an important starting place, because often when we think about forgiveness, the feeling that we have in the West is that to forgive is to let someone off, or to sort of let it go, you know, like Elsa in the Frozen movie, it's like a sort of psychological trick that we just somehow release something into the universe, into the atmosphere.

But Biblical forgiveness does never require us to say the harm that occurred, didn't hurt, doesn't matter, or wasn't wrong. And what I realized was really astonishing about the centre of the Christian faith, is that forgiveness involves saying the harm that happened does matter, was wrong, and did hurt, and forgiving it would cost

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something cosmic, something huge, something like the death of the Son of God in history.

And so that starting point of setting and even a toenail on the road of forgiveness means that the beginning point is not sweeping anything under the carpet, and it's not minimizing what happened, it's recognizing and acknowledging the scale of the harm.

And because, you know, Jesus, Christians believe Jesus is God, incarnate, God in flesh dwelling among us, you know, the scale of what our pain and suffering and what that harm actually means to God sort of becomes to be revealed. So acknowledging the harm and coming to terms with it might look like rage and anger, it might look like deep and profound sorrow that is not quick, you know, it's not a sort of fast passing, you know, one little tear, and then you've just got to be over it.

It's like there can be a real process of wrestling with the harm. And again, I think the Biblical literature creates a space for that we see things like the Book of Lamentations, we see, you know, all sorts of Psalms that really do provide space for that wrestling with both the rage and the pain of egregious harm and injustice that has happened to us. So, the starting point for forgiveness is never minimizing what was wrong.

It's like fully realizing it and bringing it into the light.

**Lorna Dueck:** And I think there's sometimes you wrestle with this in your writing, the overemphasis on Matthew 5, verse 24. "First go and reconcile with your brother and then come back and do your offering."

It's not as quick you write, as one, you know, as three lines. So, explain the dynamic there.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah, thank you.

**Lorna Dueck:** Those are the words of Jesus. Go and reconcile.

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**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yes.

So that's a really interesting passage, which is really important, right? It's like, don't come to God and, you know, worship Him if you're sort of in a tussle with someone. And there's something you could do to set that right, like the impetus is to have wholeness and healing in our human relationships as we come to God in prayer.

But often that is used outside of the context of sort of ordinary day to day relationships, which is the context Jesus is speaking about it in.

Often that is used and weaponized against someone who's experienced huge moral injury and harm so that the impetus is kind of on them to cover the distance of abuse and massive moral wrongdoing that has taken place. But actually, what we see elsewhere in the Scriptures is that Jesus requires when we have done wrong to be forgiven by God, that we repent, that we own up to and confess the sin that has occurred. And that's how we can actually receive forgiveness.

And so, I think the Bible is clear that although when we're in a position of being the one who's harmed through the grace of God, through the power of God, we release forgiveness through the cross of Christ and give it to God. The actual reconciliation can only occur if there's repentance on the part of the person who has done the abuse.

And so I think that Scripture is about us having that open heart to God, seeking His help in every way, not to be those who are living in and carrying bitterness in a way that's wrong or toxic, that ruins our lives and spoils the community and relationships of others around us.

But it's not a means of excusing egregious moral harm and moral wrongdoing or letting a perpetrator continue to perpetrate abuse or harm.

**Lorna Dueck:** And whose job then is it to challenge wrongdoing? When you've got it front and center as something that's happened in your life.

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**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah.

So, one of the reasons that I've become a bit more involved in advocacy and standing alongside those who've suffered and those who've been hurt is that sometimes we can be so crushed and broken by the abuse we've experienced. And the person who's abused us may well have all kinds of levels of power and access and authority that we don't have, that we actually need others in the Christian community to stand with us, a bit like Moses and Aaron, hold our hands up so that we can be loved and receive the love of Christ.

So, the Bible seems to be clear as well that the Holy Spirit convicts' people of sin.

And there may well be times in relationships where we can go and challenge somebody who's hurt us in some way. But an experience of egregious harm, an experience of abuse, it's not actually on the person who's been utterly crushed and destroyed and devastated necessarily to bring about, you know, the work of repentance in the perpetrator.

It may be that leaders and elders need to come around that person and do some of that work alongside.

**Lorna Dueck:** What's been your experience in trying to do that, to go to or to set up a structure where a perpetrator is held accountable?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** In all honesty, Lorna, very mixed. I mean, I would say there have been a few occasions where, a situation where I have been able to help someone, having me as a leader or, you know, someone who's regarded as a theologian or apologist, whatever, coming alongside them means that, you know, a board or a group of people actually listen to the case and listen to the person who suffered.

So, it shouldn't be the case that my voice would carry more weight, but in whatever that situation is, it actually does. And so, it's a joy to be able to, and actually a responsibility for leaders to use our voices well on behalf of those who suffered.

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And I found that, you know, doing it in a way that is Biblical and evidence-based and humble and that is encouraging, you know, proper investigation, you know, not calling on council culture or kind of trial by media, but a good solid process that can assess what has happened in a way that is really fair to the victim, but also fair to the accused. That where that happens, there's a good outcome.

But sometimes people circle the wagons and, you know, just are not open to that kind of process. And then I think Biblical forgiveness. And one of the analogies I use in the book is, you know, how if you buy a house, you go into negotiation about buying that house.

And eventually in the UK, you get your mortgage and you know, you have your deposit that you've saved, and the money goes into the solicitor's account, the attorney's account. I think in the US it's called the escrow. I'm not sure how it is in Canada, but essentially the money goes to somewhere kind of governed and neutral.

That's not your bank account and it's not the bank account of the sellers. And then eventually the transaction happens and the deeds are transferred for the money. And I find that a really helpful visual image of what Biblical forgiveness can look like.

So, through what Christ has done on the cross, I'm empowered to make an honest assessment of the harm that has been done to me. I'm not trying to minimise the suffering I've experienced, the egregious harm that's happened to me.

But through the cross of Christ and the power of the cross, the forgiveness I've received, the grace of Christ through the cross, I can offer my vengeance and grievance to Jesus. And I give it to Him, and I say, I forgive, I release my right to get vengeance and the outcome that I want on the perpetrator.

And I give that to Jesus. And that's a bit like the money for the house going into the escrow or the solicitor's account. But actually, reconciliation can't occur if the perpetrator doesn't repent.

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So really the money, the forgiveness and the full grace of actual reconciliation is only received by the wrongdoer if they also repent both to Christ and to me. And that's when reconciliation occurs, but forgiveness can occur without that full reconciliation of relationship. And I find that a really helpful image that is quite freeing because often as Christians, we can be worried, have I really forgiven the person? If we're not kind of, you know, totally restored to how things were before or how other people think they should be.

But yes, if you've given to God that bitterness and grievance and you've said, I forgive through the grace of Christ, you have forgiven.

**Lorna Dueck:** So, you're very clear to de-link forgiveness and reconciliation, to take the pressure off the victim that there must be reconciliation. It's a very different.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah. And if you think about how often in situations of abuse, whether it's domestic abuse in a marriage where a wife is told, oh, forgive him. And that therefore means you have to stay in an abusive marriage and continue being battered and just submit to it.

And so often that the idea of forgiveness as, you know, as the same thing as reconciliation has been that a confusion around that has been used to harm people. You think about leaders who commit sexual abuse or whatever and say, oh, well, I'm sorry, and then just carry on. But actually, a reconciliation can't occur until a penalty is being paid for the crime, until, you know, there's a process that has taken place.

And actually, in cases of abuse, it may be that this side of heaven, there isn't a kind of relational reconciliation. And we trust God with that in eternity.

**Lorna Dueck:** And I read in your book, a great compassion and Jesus who had compassion on the suffering, because you actually go through some scientific analysis on the trauma that is caused to our nervous system.

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There's a physicality that sin, that when people have offended and hurt us, it leaves an effect on our physicality. And you want us to experience healing and relief from that, as Jesus would.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** That's so, I really love that there's a whole chapter on trauma and forgiveness and really exploring what trauma does to the human body and to the brain and processing that, and thinking about how the fact that the suffering of Christ on the cross, which is how ultimately any forgiveness is possible, you know, divine forgiveness that we receive, but also that empowering as followers of Jesus to forgive others.

It all comes through that event of Christ's crucifixion. And actually, the fact that Jesus' suffering is embodied, and He experiences extreme trauma and the center of the Christian faith is a traumatized Savior. And that is how forgiveness then becomes possibly so fascinating.

And then in the process of writing this as well as doing a lot of research and reading around some of the psychological literature of healing from these kinds of wounds. And there's this whole area of work around how important in trauma recovery it is for a victim to have someone bear empathetic witness to what they experienced. So, you know, this isn't even like Christians writing this.

This is what science tells us. So, to recover from trauma, one of the things that is really helpful is to have someone else bear witness to the egregious harm we experienced. And just the power of someone else acknowledging that is very freeing.

And that is exactly what happens in the Christian faith. It's not just any old someone else. It's God Himself, God incarnate in Christ, bearing witness, not just in words or theory, but in His very body on the cross to our suffering.

And it's just so powerful, isn't it?

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**Lorna Dueck:** Because you write how it's actually trapped in our nervous system. So, there's a physicality, as Christ gave a physicality to forgiveness. There is a physicality that's been affected. Tell us about what the brain might suppress, but the body does not forget.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah. In trauma studies, what the evidence suggests is that when we're harmed, the body has all kinds of survival mechanisms.

And the brain, one of the survival mechanisms is to kind of mentally forget or dissociate. And that means that you have very little kind of emotional sense of connection to either what happened or even to reality. There can be a kind of just a shutting down almost as a survival mechanism.

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But actually, that then shows up in the body in different ways. So, it might be heart palpitations or panic attacks or stress that we experience and feel that becomes trapped in our nervous system. And so, the process of healing from these things isn't only mental and spiritual, it is both those things, but the impact of healing is actually felt in the human body.

And yeah, it's physical. And I find it fascinating that, you know, 2000 years before psychologists knew that, God in Christ at the cross demonstrates this. The love of Jesus is demonstrated by God on a cross.

God embodied suffering with us and for us. And so, there's something very powerful about that in our broken and hurting world, that the Gospel has this extraordinary grace at the center to those of us who suffer. And then as we forgive, as we do actually release and let go to God, not just to the universe and not in a way that minimizes what's happened to us.

We're released in the most beautiful and powerful way.

**Lorna Dueck:** You write about it as the divine witness, the divine witness, the cross, the physicality of that sums that up, that it's such a complete, it's not just something, like you said, in your mind. You also write that the person who wishes they could be forgiven needs to know that there's this sense that they've been wronged, that they've been hurt.

Tell me about that. Why do I need to know that?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** So that's about that. I loved that phrase when I read it, empathetic bearing of witness to the harm.

And it just resonated with me so much that to not be sort of minimized, "there, there," to not be told it wasn't that bad, and to not be told, oh, just let it go, like by some sheer force of your will or ability, like it's kind of all on you. But that a major part of the healing journey and of releasing the trauma and stress actually from the body, and

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this could be historic for over years and years and years and years, a major aspect of that is having it empathized with and borne witness to by someone outside you and not by you. And for us as Christians, that can be God, that's the center of the Christian faith.

**Lorna Dueck:** You know, and that means a lot, Amy, because I know you've sat in court a lot. You have sat with victims. And while the court process is necessary, it's also even minimizing.

Okay, tell us about what you've seen and how that compares to the Christian need for Jesus to be able to go into forgiveness.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah, honestly. So, my experiences of court have been, you know, supporting victim and those giving evidence and supporting them by being sort of present in the public gallery, but then also sort of behind the scenes, you know, between sittings of the court.

And I would say that, you know, a major part of what a victim is experiencing in a trial is, you know, the idea that the hope, obviously, that there's going to be human justice for what done to them, that the perpetrator is going to be held to account by the law in some way. But the process of going through that, of being interrogated on the stand, of being stripped, you know, by the defense attorneys, obviously, everyone has the right to a defense, but for the victim, it's extremely difficult and bruising to go through all of that. And underneath it all, the whole thing that's going underneath it all is denying that what you say actually happened.

So, it's the opposite of having your pain borne witness to. Now, ultimately, if the judgment goes in your favor, as a victim, ultimately, there is this amazing bearing of witness to what you experienced. But the trial itself is a trial of that.

And it's just extraordinarily difficult. It's like reliving the horror again, but with that deep fear that you're going to be disbelieved and discarded again.

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**Lorna Dueck:** And what do we do as Christian Support Network, as the church, around these kind of situations? What's needed?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** So, I think one of the things that's really needed and I try and do in the book is to draw a distinction between appropriate and necessary human justice processes and divine forgiveness.

So, it is possible for a perpetrator of murder or some horrible crime to repent and become a Christian in prison. Like we've all heard the stories, and God is working in amazing ways in prisons. People who've committed crimes to receive divine forgiveness. But what receiving that divine forgiveness does not do is get rid of the need for that person to pay a civil or criminal penalty for the crime they've done.

And in fact, I would say if their repentance is genuine, that repentance to a loving and kind and just God is genuine, then a criminal ought to be prepared to say, I've come to Christ, I've received His forgiveness, but I'm now actually going to confess and own up to what I did, even though that might mean I pay a penalty for the crime.

Now, by contrast, what often happens in the church is that Christians will often sympathize with the abuser, you know, the man who's abused his wife or the person who's sexually abused a teenager or a girl. I was talking to an expert in this, someone who's worked his whole career as an attorney for survivors of sexual abuse.

And he said in every criminal trial of clergy sexual abuse of a child or a young person, every single trial, church leaders and or members of the church have come to the trial in support. But in 100% of the cases, they came to support the perpetrator, never the victim, even though the victim was a member of the Christian community. So, there's something in our psyche that gets tied up with this idea of forgiveness that becomes weaponized.

And, you know, to sympathize with the perpetrator rather than the one who's been harmed. And it's kind of upside down of what the Gospel actually is.

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**Lorna Dueck:** You know, I'm remembering, and perhaps you've quoted this as well, Rachel Denholder, the famous gymnast who led the charge as a Christian against Larry Nassar, who's now doing life in prison for his crimes against those young gymnasts.

And she said, I forgive you. And I would request you get the full force of the law for your crimes.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Absolutely.

Yeah. And that's a really, really great example of what I was trying to say, of getting that the right way around, that we, you know, that we don't confuse divine, eternal forgiveness with human consequences, relational consequences, criminal consequences, civil consequences.

**Lorna Dueck:** Yeah. I liked how you used the Bible verse, "In this world, you will have trouble..." (John 16:33) You know, Jesus has challenged that. And so, this is a really fractious, difficult process, you know, figuring out forgiveness in this world, isn't it?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** It really is.

And again, that's why the book is trying to do a really deep dive into this. And as you said earlier, there's a combination of stories of testimonies of people who've, you know, forgiven and experienced incredible grace and power of God to forgive amazing things. But also wrestling with the text of Scripture to make sure we're interpreting that rightly.

And, you know, hopefully, a deep engagement with what's going on in the wider culture where there's so much division and rage at the moment.

And where we as Christians, of all people have got something to say into that.

**Lorna Dueck:** And tell us about the origins of forgiveness. It's profoundly a Christian concept, isn't it?

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**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Absolutely.

Yeah. So, again, it slightly depends on your definition, of course, because I think outside the church, people think that forgiveness means letting someone off. So, there's a sort of actually morally dubious sense around it.

Some people think of it as kind of moral weakness, that you're just too weak to bring about justice, so you forgive. Outside the church as well, forgiveness is often seen as a kind of personal psychological phenomena that actually has nothing to do with the individual, or even the moral harm. It's a sort of trick you play on your own brain to make yourself feel better, like release it to the universe.

But in the Bible, of course, forgiveness means that the full scale of the horror of wrongdoing is fully accounted for. And we are made right. We are set right into relationship with God where the slate is completely wiped clean when we're forgiven.

And that's something that happens at, you know, what philosophers would say, like an ontological level, at the level of your being, you know, at the deepest level of who you are. What is wrong about you is set right. And only God can do that, you know.

**Lorna Dueck:** So, because there are some people listening, myself included, of course, who have done wrong to people, like we've hurt people, and we might not get forgiven by that person. So, can God, you know, do something for us when the real, the living example has not been able to forgive?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yeah, I think this is such an interesting area. So, receiving divine forgiveness, receiving divine forgiveness happens when we repent and confess, when we own, you know, our wrongdoing and we bring it to God.

And through the cross, Jesus can forgive us. And that means that the harm we've done is actually paid for. It's paid for at a cosmic level.

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And that actually dignifies the harm that has occurred to the other person. So, I do believe we can be forgiven by God for the harm we've done when we repent, when we confess. And through the cross, you know, we can be washed clean of that.

Now, that person may not be a Christian, they may not be in a position to verbally offer us their forgiveness, which would also occur through Christ. But we are actually forgiven because, you know, ultimately, it's through the cross and through, you know, the work of God that that forgiveness can occur. And I think there's a parallel as well with self-forgiveness.

So, a lot of us will struggle, and I write about this, a lot of us will struggle with forgiving ourselves. So, maybe that we can believe Jesus has forgiven me, but we still continue with this sort of sense of condemnation and this sense of gloom and doom. And we can't kind of forget how we messed up in some way.

And so, the Gospel message also really speaks to those who struggle with that, under that psychological burden of our own condemnation, that at a kind of cosmic level, we are actually forgiven. And receiving that forgiveness, it's like it can be a process of it sinking in from the head to the heart to the body. But it's like practices, some of the practices of the church, like confession and absolution, are there to help us do exactly that.

Like we verbally say it, you know, we, in an embodied way, we receive communion and go through a process of confession and absolution.

**Lorna Dueck:** And is this profoundly a Christian concept?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Absolutely. It doesn't come from anywhere else? Not this form of forgiveness, not the kind of forgiveness that is rooted in the transaction of the cross.

So, obviously, other traditions will have forgiveness, but it just means letting someone off and there's no justice. So, there's a kind of minimizing, like I said, or just release it to the universe. It's just a psychological trick.

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So, outside of Christianity, people will use the word, but it doesn't have this meaning or this power.

**Lorna Dueck:** There's been a price that's been paid.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Yes, exactly.

**Lorna Dueck:** And you also challenge, and this is, you think we can take this into societal issues.

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** So, a couple of ways, and this has kind of come out of my work in public Christianity. You know, before the pandemic and around and after the pandemic, I was doing a lot of public theology and university campuses where you had sort of the rise of identity politics, the rage of cancel culture, the sense of massive grievance, particularly, you know, on the kind of left wing of student politics and, you know, in the media and everything.

That idea that there's power in our grievance and the idea behind it is called intersectionality. And that's that, you know, our human identity is constructed on the basis of layers of intersectional injustice we've experienced.

So, if we're women, we've got sexism. If we're gay, we've got homophobia. If we're a person of color, we've got racism. If we're disabled, we've got ableism.

You know, think of all the grievances, colonization, patriarchy, you know, all the things. And it's by channeling the rage that, you know, we feel about these things that we have power in the cultural moment. And that's where you saw all of that stuff about tear down the statues of any oppressor from history and where you saw cancel culture.

So, if someone says something that offends me, they have to die a social, moral or professional death. I'm going to take their career. I'm going to, you know, make their name mud. I'm going to harass them online and, you know, cancel culture, all this rage.

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And in that kind of mindset, forgiveness and grace is moral weakness. You're letting perpetrators and abusers get off. You know, you're letting a homophobe get off. You're letting a racist get off or, you know, whatever, whatever the crime or the sense of great and massive injustice you feel. And so, forgiveness is gone.

Grace is gone. And everything is like attrition and domination through these categories. And so, I had the opportunity to give an address to the UK Parliament for the National Prayer Breakfast.

And I spoke on forgiveness as the greatest gift the Christian faith could offer our age. Forgiveness that with cancel culture says moral harm and wrongdoing are extremely serious. There is death for transgression, but the death that occurs is the death of the Son of God in history, like forgiving it would require something massive.

And that has actually happened. And what that enables is a flow of grace into the culture that we've lost as we've sort of turned away from our Christian roots in the West. We've lost grace and the possibility of rehabilitation. All we've got is retribution.

And then on the right of politics, we've seen a reaction to identity, in reaction to identity politics, which said, you know, the white male, for the identity politics people, the white male is, you know, got the least layers of social injustice, so they need to have the least power, they need to shut up, and they can't have a job and whatever.

So then on the right, there's been a big swing away, and the rise of this much more kind of aggressive worldview, like dominator worldview, this sort of strongman ideology, might is right, and even the, what I call the kind of fetishizing of cruelty. So, you don't just want to have safe borders for your country, you want people who try to come across them to actually suffer grievously. Now, there's a real difference between those two things and cruelty arising as a source of power. And again, it's victimhood and grievance, it's just a different group of people.

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And so, addressing that need in the culture and saying, you know, through the cross, there's a kind of forgiveness that can deal with the cruelty and the grievance that you're expressing and experiencing in the grace of a second chance. And there is one who should be valorized, and it's not the strongman ideal of, you know, Nietzsche or whatever, it's actually the person of Christ who we get to follow and worship and magnify. So that was one of the ways I think forgiveness speaks to our cultural moment, both to the left and the right.

And then the other way was internationalism. And, you know, we're seeing the rise of nationalistic ideologies, and my grandparents escaped Soviet occupation, having also lived under the Nazis during the Second World War. So, my family, you know, they have lived under sort of two totalitarian systems.

And experienced, you know, the sort of real dark side of nationalism, national socialism in Germany. So, this is something that, you know, I'm really interested in. And so, as we see people worrying about Christian nationalism, but then also wanting to kind of love our country.

I'm trying to say in the book, it's got a whole chapter on this, that there's a massive difference between patriotism and nationalism. Nationalism demands that we assert the strength of our nation. And we never self-reflect about any aspect of our past or history that might need repentance and healing.

But we assert our superiority and our strengths. Whereas patriotism means we can love our country. And we can be proud of our country.

But we're honest about the things of the past that have not been good. And we can exercise repentance and forgiveness makes a difference between nationalism and patriotism.

**Lorna Dueck:** Wow. Very personal to the state. Yes, because you do have a position of teaching there in the UK. And thank you, you've come to North America as well.

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This is a really powerful new book that you've written. And it has much in it to cause us to think and to go deeply into the issues of how we have wronged others, and how we may have been wronged and think about forgiveness. What's your hope for the book, Amy?

**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Hmm.

My hope for the book is that forgiveness comes back onto the agenda of the church. Honestly, as I said earlier, I feel like everyone I spoke to when I was writing it, which is a lot of people, they say, what are you writing about? And I gave say forgiveness, they all go, oh, no, you know, oh, I've got to forgive people like guilt. I've got unforgiveness, that feeling of it's not something I want to hear about or think about is too hard or painful.

Or I've had experiences where forgiveness has been weaponized. And so, I want to bring back a conversation that is life giving and Bible centered. And, you know, brings this grace back to like the central practice of the Christian faith, both that we're receiving forgiveness, but offering it to, to a broken and wounded world.

I also pray and hope that those who've really, really suffered, who've really suffered horrific things will find hope in some of the stories. I have a friend whose father was murdered by the IRA. And she tells her story in the book of forgiving his murderers.

But what, you know, what that takes and the story of a woman called Linda Markovits, whose daughter was murdered and her story with forgiveness to that, that it's a book that sort of takes seriously what it costs, what it means, but also how wonderful and beautiful it is when we forgive. So, hoping for lots of things. And then yeah, for those who don't know the Lord to, to see something of the goodness, beauty and truth of the Gospel through this, something that would be really relevant to them.

**Lorna Dueck:** Well, Amy, thank you so much. It's just been a wonderful new look at your book on forgiveness.

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**Amy Orr-Ewing:** Thank you. Thank you so much