

Why You Should Get a Dog

by [Petr Chylek](#) (June 2023)



Dog 38, David Hockney, 1995

For Christmas 2022, my daughter gave me a book. I gave her pajamas. The book was published in the US in 1949. The pajamas were made in China in 2022. The book was a used book. The pajamas were new. The book was titled *Don't Call a Man a Dog*. No, I would never do that. The book is interesting; the pajamas are nice. I am a scientist, my daughter an artist. Not in reality, but as archetypes. Remember Carl Jung? You cannot make a scientist into an artist, or an artist into a scientist. However, one may have a part of each.

I opened the book by chance to an arbitrary page and read

about forgiveness. A dog displays many features that humans generally lack. One of them is forgiveness. People are often either unwilling or unable to forgive. We are unwilling to forgive even when we decide intellectually that we want to. We play the unpleasant past situation in our mind over and over just to convince ourselves that we have a right to hold a grudge. Sometimes we really do have the right. But the question is, is this the best we can do for ourselves?

Yes, we know we say we forgive and forget but few of us speak truthfully, few forgive fully and even fewer will forget. We carry grudges, we maintain a smoldering resentment, we fondle the hope of getting even some day.[\[1\]](#)

Sometimes we may be unable to forgive. We may be emotionally so attached to the situation that we cannot forgive even if we would like to. We are unable to disassociate ourselves from the past situation; we are helpless before our emotions.

Thus, we hold grudges. Who gets hurt by our grudges? It is only us. Nobody else. The one we hold the grudge against may not even know that we have a grudge against him/her. I have read somewhere that holding a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping that your opponent will die. It makes perfect sense, right?

Furthermore, some people say "I will forgive but not forget." This is actually the same thing as not being willing to forgive. What it means is that I really do not intend to forgive you, but, if you insist, I am willing to pretend that I do. Maimonides, the 12th century Jewish philosopher and mystic, in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, says that we have to forgive and forget. To forget here does not mean that you cannot recall the event when you need to, it means only that the memory of the event does not enter your mind uninvited.

When we hold a grudge, we often replay the event in our minds. We do it over and over and with each replay we modify it, ever so slightly, to see ourselves in a slightly better light. With time and many re-enactments of the event in our minds, an anthill becomes a mountain, and the original small misunderstanding changes until we become an innocent victim of a brutal opponent.

If you should decide to become a more considerate person, perhaps even more spiritual, the first step should be to get a dog. If you already have a dog, get a second one. If a dog does not fit your temperament, you can get a cat, or even a horse, but do not try to get an elephant. Keeping an elephant in your apartment might cause you some legal problems. A dog is one of the best solutions.

What can we learn from a dog? One thing is the forgiveness mentioned in the book I got for the Christmas, on the page that I opened to by chance. You accidentally step on his paw, you forget to give him food or water, or you leave him home alone for many hours, and he always forgives you, immediately. More precisely, he never holds any grudge against you. He is always ready to express his joy just seeing you, by being with you. His wagging tail tells you how much you mean to him, how much he enjoys your company. For him, you are always the best human being in the entire universe. To mistreat a dog is a crime equal to the worst crime against humanity.

Many religious people are ready to ask God for forgiveness of their sins. But rarely are we ready to forgive the transgressions of others against ourselves. Jesus, in the early first century taught:

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

Followed by:

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Similarly the Talmud teaches:

One who overcomes his natural tendencies and instead forgives, all his sins are forgiven.

In the *Zohar*, [\[2\]](#) the fundamental book of the Kabbalah, we read a story about a traveler who twice escaped the danger of being killed, first by a snake and then by collapse of a steep ravine. When asked what he had done that God saved his life twice, the man replied:

Whosoever wronged me, at any time, always I made peace with him and forgave him ... I refrained from going to take my rest before I forgave him, and along with him, forgave any others who had vexed me. And at no time did I brood on the injury that a man had done to me; rather I made special efforts of kindness from then on to such a man.

Thus, both Christianity and Judaism tell us that we are given the power to forgive sins. I know, you have heard many times that only God has this power. But, no! Each of us was given the power to forgive sins committed against us. If each of us

would forgive each day all those who offended us, there would be no sin left in the world. We are just unwilling to do it. We love feeling like a victim. We are so good and the world is so bad. We are unjustly suffering, being tortured by our own minds.

Many say that you are not obliged to forgive the sins of those who do not ask you for forgiveness. Many say there are sins which you are not allowed to forgive. I say no! You have to forgive always. You owe it to yourself. Otherwise you are the one who will suffer; you are the one who will stand in the path of your own peace and progress.

There is an additional warning to those who are not willing to forgive the trespasses of their neighbors. It's in the New Testament, Matthew 18:24-35. It's the story of a man who owed ten thousand talents to a king. When the man begged the king for mercy, the king forgave him the debt. After that, another man owed a small amount to that same man. That man, whom the king had forgiven his large debt, did not forgive the man who owed him a small amount and instead had him put in jail. When the king heard of what had happened, he revoked his forgiveness and put the first man in jail as well. From this it follows that forgiveness of your sins through repentance or through confession is conditional on your being able to forgive those who committed trespasses against you. If you are not able to do so, your own old sins are restored to your account.

Holding grudges harms only us. Thus, we have more than enough reason to follow a dog and learn forgiveness. We can also learn many other useful things from our dogs.

My daughter left, back to northeast; she took her pajamas with her. I keep the book and remember forgiveness.

[\[1\]](#) W. Judy, *Don't Call a Man a Dog*, Judy Publishing Company, Chicago 1949.

[2] Gershom Scholem, editor. *Zohar, the Book of Splendor*. Schocken Books 1949.

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