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**The Relationship of Forgiveness and Accountability in Christian Universities  
Abstract**

This research project was designed to explore whether Christian universities create an unintended consequence whenever they embrace forgiveness as one of the principles that identifies their institution as being Christian. At question is whether supervisors of such organizations feel free to hold those who violate the values of the organization accountable for their actions, or feel pressured from the other members of their institutions to be lenient with the offender in the name of forgiveness.

There is no doubt that forgiveness is a virtuous quality that enhances the positive impact of an organization on its members and society in general. As such, the expressions of genuine forgiveness within an organization tend to inoculate organizations against many of the negative, damaging, and weakening events that often devastate other organizations internally.

However, there are many misconceptions regarding forgiveness, including a very common and pervasive belief that forgiveness is the removal of all negative consequences related to a wrongdoing. In other words, many people improperly equate the granting of forgiveness with the release of the wrongdoer from any punishment or other type of sanction. People who hold this belief may feel that a supervisor who insists on a punishment being imposed upon an offender has not followed the Biblical mandate to grant forgiveness.

This study contends that this particular misconception about forgiveness is problematic for supervisors who wish to follow Christ's admonishment to exhibit a forgiving spirit and who are at the same time charged with the responsibility of defending the values of a Christian organization. It further contends that such supervisors often find themselves being pressured by other members of their organization to be lenient with

offenders in the name of forgiveness rather than feeling free to hold the offenders accountable for their actions. Such “forced forgiveness” will have a very negative impact on organizations, rather than the positive impact that comes from the virtuous qualities of genuine forgiveness. Verifying the existence of this phenomenon will help organizations implement plans intended to promote genuine forgiveness rather than permit forced forgiveness.