

Forgiveness

Chapter 3

Jesus spoke many times about forgiveness and the need for us to forgive those that have hurt or offended us.

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9 includes the line "Forgive us as we also have forgiven our debtors".

In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant (*a parable is a story set here on earth that has a deeper spiritual meaning, Jesus often taught with parables.*)

Read through the parable.

How did the king respond to his servant that owed him money? _____

How did the servant respond to the man that owed him a much lesser amount than his own debt to the king?

Which character in this parable reflects God's attitude towards us?

What is the main lesson in this parable?

Why is forgiveness so important?

Forgiveness is important because unforgiveness is sin. The Bible tells us that we should forgive, in fact we are commanded to. If we don't forgive those who have wronged us we disobey God and that is sin.

Unforgiveness, like other un-dealt with sins in our life, leads to broken fellowship with God. We are still His children, our relationship to Him does not change but our fellowship with Him becomes affected.

The Bible tells us clearly in Matthew 6:15 that if we do not forgive others God will not forgive us. This shows us how important forgiveness is to God.

He forgave us of our sins at a great cost to Himself - His only son Jesus. If we are recipients of God's grace and forgiveness we should also extend grace and forgiveness to others. If we don't we become like the unmerciful servant in the parable.

What forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness is not:

- Overlooking something, pretending it didn't happen
- Forgetting a hurt or offence

- Covering up a wrongdoing or ignoring the need for consequences or penalties
- Without cost (unforgiveness is more costly)
- Based on feelings
- Putting yourself last, being a 'doormat'

What forgiveness is.

Forgiveness is:

- A decision
- From the heart (Matt 18:35), genuine
- Extending grace to those who have wronged you.
- A choice to end the cycle of revenge and leave justice in the hands of God.
- Liberating for the one who forgives.
- Wiping the slate clean, not maintaining a position of offense or holding a wrong against another.

Forgiveness can be tough.

The *Word for Today* puts it like this:

Some things are harder to forgive than others. Some people are harder to forgive than others. God knows the pain you feel and the tears that you've cried for yourself. God is for you, not against you. So does God want us to forgive the people who have caused us all the pain? When you're sore from your wounds, this is a tricky idea to get your head around. It may feel like to forgive is almost like excusing what they have done to you. But that's not how forgiveness works at all. History's biggest statement of forgiveness was said by an innocent man hanging from an instrument of torture: "Father forgive them...they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34) Jesus wasn't excusing what they had done to Him but He was praying forgiveness over their actions.

Forgiveness doesn't require you to take the abuse. Forgiveness doesn't ask you to remain in a dangerous situation. Forgiveness doesn't mean pretending that stuff didn't happen. Forgiveness is about freeing yourself from the hurt.

True forgiveness isn't easy. In a way it's not about them, it's more about you. It is about freeing yourself from what has been done to you. It is a part of your healing.

But where do you start? How can you forgive when all you feel is hatred? Forgiveness is a choice not a feeling. Seek God on what to do with these feelings. God's shoulder is infinitely big enough for you to cry on. Ask God to help you with the impossible.¹

Unforgiveness is costly.

Holding onto unforgiveness damages us. It leads to a lack of peace and it is a blockage to us receiving answers to prayer, healing, baptism in the Holy Spirit and other blessings from God.

If unforgiveness is left long enough it turns to resentment and bitterness.

Read Hebrews 12:14-15. This verse tells us to "see to it", in other words it is our responsibility to make sure that bitterness and resentment do not take hold in our lives through unforgiveness. Sometimes it is only with the enabling of God's grace that we can forgive in difficult circumstances. But in Him we can forgive and be free. This grace is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that helps us.

This verse also tells us that the 'bitter root' causes trouble and defiles many. When unforgiveness gets to this point it doesn't just affect us but it affects those around us. It goes from being internal to being demonstrated outwardly to others. Unforgiveness affects relationships

and the poison of unforgiveness can defile many who are touched by it.

If unforgiveness is left un-dealt with it can lead to sickness (either physical or psychological) and can open a door way to demonic oppression.

Why should we forgive?

There are two reasons why we should forgive:

1. Because we are commanded to in the Bible. To forgive is to obey God.
2. It brings glory to God. When we forgive we reflect His character and nature as believers and we reflect the nature of the Kingdom of God (see Matt 18:23)

Make forgiveness a habit.

We need to make extending forgiveness to others a habit, something that we do as often as we need to. Just as daily we should ask God to forgive our sins, we should also search our own hearts and ask Him to reveal to us those that we need to forgive. Sometimes we also need to forgive ourselves of things we have done.

Make an effort to keep short accounts. Don't let small issues fester into larger ones. Choose to resolve issues early and forgive early.

Sometimes it is more important to be reconciled or at peace with others than it is to be right.

Questions:

We should forgive others because _____

Have you found it easy or hard to forgive people that have wronged you in the past?

Can you think of anyone that you may still be struggling to forgive for something that they have done to you?

If you would like to, share with the person doing this book with you about this.

When hurts are deep or wrongdoings are great, it can be tough to forgive. If you are struggling with this, bring it to God in prayer this week. Ask Him to help you come to a place of forgiveness.

You may need to talk to a pastor or other mature believer about it so they can help you work through it.

Some recommended reading if you are struggling is:

'Cleansing your Heart of Anger and Bitterness' by Ernest J. Gruen

'Freedom to Choose; Principles for Victorious Living' by Ernest J. Gruen.

Both these books are available to borrow through the church.



- Make a list of those you need to forgive and bring each one to God in prayer. Make a choice to forgive each person. Get help with this if you need it.
- Ask about , and make it a priority to attend, the next Freedom Encounter Weekend. These are held each year or as required.
- Begin the daily habit of forgiving others.