

**Wednesday Devotion, Forgiveness is a Choice**  
**February 1, 2023**

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-22, the Voice

**Peter:** *Lord, when someone has sinned against me, how many times ought I forgive him? Once? Twice? As many as seven times?*

**Jesus:** *You must forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven.*

Quotes:

"Actually, no one has to forgive—forgiveness is a choice. Forgiveness means that we release our suffering over difficult situations; it does not mean we have to put ourselves back into hurtful situations. Forgiveness means that even though what happened is not okay, you can move on and make peace for yourself."

"When we choose forgiveness, we release our past to heal our present."  
— Fred Luskin, *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*

Reflection:

Choice ... What a powerful word. We make thousands of decisions consciously and unconsciously daily. They can be as simple as oatmeal or bacon for breakfast; and as infinitely complicated as choosing a partner for life.

As Christians, we celebrate this gift of free will. Our all-knowing and all-powerful God could have designed us to be robots following a pre-designed script, but instead, our loving Creator offers us the opportunity to respond to this gift with our lives. God could force us to play specific roles, yet instead invites us to respond to love and grace with each moment we choose what to do and think next.

Jesus, God with us, says one of the choices we are continually asked to make is forgiveness. He asks us to forgive someone who sins against us 7 x 70 times, which is an absurdly large number, to make a point. Forgiveness matters!

We are redeemed and forgiven through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This forgiveness empowers us to make more Christ-like choices. Our Creator is teaching us how unforgiveness in our past stops the fullness of life today. God is saying that when we forgive, we can live healthier lives in our present. It doesn't mean condoning hurtful and evil action, but it does mean freedom from its hold on your soul. Jesus is offering us something incredible; we get to be partners with God in our healing by choosing forgiveness.

Questions:

- If forgiveness is a choice, why is it sometimes so hard to make?
- What do you need to let go of in order to allow for the powerful healing of forgiveness in your life?

Songs:

- Traditional, Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive, UMH #390,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqG\\_iQwqEOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqG_iQwqEOE)
- Contemporary, I Will Forgive You by Sanctus Reel,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWLxHLzlgR4>

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for free will. Guide us as we navigate this powerful and challenging gift of choice. So often the need to ask for forgiveness and offer forgiveness is a tough choice for us. Help us choose your will and your way. Please do your powerful, healing work of forgiveness in us and our daily choices. In the Holy Spirit's power, amen.