



36: *Thankful for Forgiveness* (Mt 18:15-35)

What are YOU thankful for? Health, family, friends, food, financial provision - the list goes on and on. But what about being Thankful For Forgiveness, an invaluable kindness that extends from this life into eternal life. Today we are reminded of the incredible forgiveness that has been offered to us by God and how we should extend that same forgiveness to others.

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teachingnotes

Confronting another Christian

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

If your Christian **brother or sister** is living in sin, Jesus **COMMANDS** us to approach and **point out their fault**, to tell them *"What you are doing is wrong."* Some might say "that's judging" and they'd be right. Yet this *IS* exactly what Jesus tells us to do. We learned in Matthew 7:1-6, Jesus didn't say we should never judge, but that **we should judge WITH mercy and judge WITHOUT hypocrisy**. The believer is to approach *in obedience to Jesus* in hopes to confront, correct, & comfort the one who turns from sin.

- 🕒 **That's the goal** - to be right with the Lord Jesus and to be in right relationship with others, so that the one once living in sin is genuinely forgiven and restored, and **THANKFUL FOR FORGIVENESS!**

What Happens When The Person Won't Listen?

Matthew 18:16-17 (NIV) But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

What's it mean to **treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector**? Does it simply mean, treat them like a *LOST SHEEP*? Nope. We show tons of grace towards *LOST SHEEP*. We seek *them* out and make time for them.

- ✘ This is NOT what we are told to do with those who claim Christ yet refuse to repent of ongoing sin. We are commanded to kick them out and have nothing to do with them.

We see how this played out in 1 Cor 5 (see our series on 1 Corinthians called, "A Beautiful Mess") when a man was to be kicked out of church gatherings for not being willing to turn away from his sexual relationship with his step-mother.

Example of Church Discipline

1 Corinthians 5:5 (NIV) hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

Handing this man over to Satan means no longer allowing him to be under the covering of the protection of God's people.

The destruction of the flesh is referring to the dismantling of his sinful desires.

The Church is to respond like parents kicking out disobedient teenagers who refuse to respond to discipline, in the hope that this man will finally feel the weight of his sin, his need to repent, that he be made right with the Lord and His people and **on the day of the Lord** (when Jesus returns) that his **spirit may be saved**.

More Examples of Church Discipline

1 Timothy 1:19-20 (NIV) ...holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Titus 3:10-11 (NIV) Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

Many people think, "That doesn't sound like a very 'Christian' thing to do...does it?" Well, I guess that depends on what CHRIST says, right?

✓ It that's what CHRIST tells us to do, then it IS very CHRISTian.

✗ To NOT do that is actually 'not very CHRISTian'.

How to Treat the False Follower

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (NIV) I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that **you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister** but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. **"Expel the wicked person from among you."**

Expel the wicked person from among you? Paul quotes from numerous Old Testament texts that say the same thing (Deut. 13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7). Those Israelites who disobeyed God and refused to repent would be cast out from the family. So too, New Covenant followers of Jesus are *not to associate with these who claim Christ but live in disobedience to Him...UNTIL they turn from their sin.*

The desire is for reconciliation, to see this man come back to obedience. *As a parent what is the most loving thing you can do...let your kids get away with disobedience OR discipline them and train them to obey?*

According to Jesus, the goal of discipline is to

1. Call the brother or sister back to right relationship with God and God's people.
2. Make sure God's people don't put up with disobedience in their own lives and influence others to do the same thing.

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) If your brother or sister sins, **go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.** **If they listen to you, you have won them over.** But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

It's then that Jesus says something that many Christians have quoted, but never understood or appreciated in context.

Binding/Loosing/Agreeing - 2 or 3 in My Name

Matthew 18:18-20 (NIV) Truly I tell you, whatever you **bind on earth** will be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose on earth** will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you that if **two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for,** it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where **two or three gather in My Name,** there am I with them.

To **bind** and **loose** has nothing to do with demons, but **discipline**. This isn't about praying against the devil or demons. Instead...

- To **bind** is to proclaim that the person is still a slave to their sin.
- To **loose** is to proclaim that the person has been set free from their sin.
- To **agree about anything they ask for** - in context - is about the believers who **agree** about *expelling* one who disobeys and *embracing* the one who obeys, a decision that is recognized **in heaven** (by God).
- **Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.** The Presence of Jesus is among those who follow Him and meet together, but this context is all about **reinforcing the reality that it is Jesus who judges through His people.** Before we meet one last time to confront this 'brother' or 'sister' who is in sin, we would likely pause and ask, "Who are WE to judge him/her? After all, we have sinned too!" But that's when the words of Jesus should stampede our thoughts of inadequacy because...**Jesus is WITH us and Jesus commands us to do this.**

✗ And if Jesus commands it and we don't do it, then we are being disobedient.

👁️ The hope is to see the Christian who hasn't been living for Christ to turn back to Him and away from their sin.

The Positive Result of Church Discipline

2 Corinthians 2:5-10a (NIV) If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. **Now** instead, **you ought to forgive and comfort him**, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to **reaffirm your love for him.** Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. Anyone you forgive, I also forgive.

Here we see the result of the Corinthian church expelling the disobedient man from them - the one they had to discipline; the one they hurt over & prayed for, the one they loved enough to tell the truth, the one they pushed out of the house...*had come back!* As the Father welcomed back the prodigal, the Church is to **forgive, comfort, and love** the repentant brother/sister!

BIG TRUTH: FORGIVEN PEOPLE FORGIVE PEOPLE.

How Many Times Should We Forgive the Repentant?

Matthew 18:21–22 (NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Depending on the translation, **70x7** (CSB, NAS, LSB, KJV, NKJV) or **seventy-seven times** (NIV, NET, ESV) is a bunch of times! Surely Jesus’ point is not that we keep count, but that ***we forgive the one who seeks forgiveness...just as the Father does.***

Earthly Story Revealing Eternal Truths

Matthew 18:23–25 (NIV) Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold [6,000 talents] was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

The Greek term translated by the NIV as **ten thousand bags of gold** is literally **10,000 talents**. A **talent** was a weight (75 lbs) and the term for the highest known denomination of money in the ancient Roman Empire.¹

- 1 **talent** (75 lbs of) of silver was equal to 6,000 denarius.
- 1 denarius amounts to about 1 day’s wage of the average worker.
- 🕒 1 Talent = 6,000 days wages = about 20 years worth of work (minus Sabbath days off)
- ❖ **10,000 talents = 200,000 years worth of work!** He will NEVER be able to pay it back!!!

Josephus (ancient Jewish historian) wrote that the **combined annual collections of taxes from all of Israel** including Galilee, Judea, Samaria, just south of Judea (Idumea), and East of Judea (Perea) **totaled 800 talents** (Jos. Ant. 17.318; 320).² It would have taken 12.5 years to collect that amount of money annually from all of those regions!

📖 The audience of Jesus would have understood the impossibility of one man getting this far in debt. He will NEVER be able to pay it back!!!

Matthew 18:26–27 (NIV) At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s Master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Remember, this is *a story about the kingdom of heaven*, and how the KING of the kingdom settles accounts that others can’t pay back. The servant owes more than he could ever pay. Rather than give the servant more time, **the Master** decided to fully **cancel the debt** and set him free! That’s IT! But rather than go celebrate with friends...

Matthew 18:28–29 (NIV) But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins [100 denarii]. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.”

This man didn’t owe the servant anything close to the amount the previous servant had already been forgiven for. **10,000 bags of gold** vs. **100 silver coins**, or in Greek **10,000 talents** vs. **100 denarii**. Like the ancient audience Jesus was speaking to, we should see *the absolute ABSURDITY* of demanding such a small amount back after being forgiven SO MUCH MORE!

Matthew 18:30–33 (NIV) But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?**” Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?**”

The answer is, “Of course!” This guy had been forgiven more than he could ever be able to pay back! What the other man owed him was *nothing in comparison* to all that HE had owed the Master!

Matthew 18:34–35 (NIV) In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

According to Jesus, our heavenly Father is super **GRACIOUS** - willing to extend forgiveness to those who could never repay it, BUT...super **JUST** - withholding forgiveness from those who withhold forgiveness to their **brothers and sisters** in Christ.

This is the EXPECTATION & COMMAND from the Lord: Those who are **THANKFUL FOR FORGIVENESS** are to extend forgiveness to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who refuse to forgive others have forfeited the eternal forgiveness that God offers us. **Forgiving others isn’t a good work to earn forgiveness, but a grace poured into your life that overflows to others.**

¹ Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 283.

² Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 458–459.

BIG TRUTH: FORGIVEN PEOPLE FORGIVE PEOPLE.

WHO do YOU Need to Forgive? (Write code-names below)

? Will you hold on to that HATE? Or...will you offer forgiveness **from your heart?**

☀ **William Arnott** "Mere human determination to have done with it will not cast the evil thing away. You must bathe your whole being in God's pardoning mercy; and those venomous creatures will instantly let go their hold."³

Are you THANKFUL FOR FORGIVENESS?

Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and **forgive one another** if any of you has a grievance against someone. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** What has the Lord forgiven YOU for? How many times has He forgiven YOU? So too, I am called - you are called, to **forgive as the Lord forgave you** - no longer holding that over the other person's head, no longer bringing it up, treating that person as a part of your FAITH FAMILY. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And **be thankful.**

? **Are YOU Forgiven? Are you Forgiving?**

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405), **Boss & Amelia Mulkey** (850-464-6717), or **Tom & Martha Waddail** (850-973-0011).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you *most* from today's teaching?
2. **Read Matthew 18:15-17.** Why are churches so reluctant to practice church discipline even though Jesus commanded us to? What is the GOAL of this discipline? What attitude must believers take in confronting sinful brothers/sisters (Mt 7:1-6 might be helpful here)?
3. **Read Matthew 18:18-20.** How have you heard these terms used - "bind, loose, agree, two or three gather in my name" - *IN* or *OUT* of context? Explain your answer. How does reading these in context help you to appreciate the responsibility Jesus has given to judge with mercy?
4. Read what Paul wrote in **1 Cor 5:4-5**, **1 Tim 1:19-20**, **Titus 3:10-11**, and **1 Cor 5:9-13**. Talk about the ultimate outcomes of not allowing professing Christians to live in sin without being confronted with the truth.
5. **Read 2 Cor 2:5-10.** What did the discipline of the man in 1 Cor 5 result in? Take a few minutes to discuss the beauty of the verbs Paul uses in commanding the church to welcome him back.
6. **Read Matthew 18:23-35.** Discuss the significance of why followers of Jesus must extend His forgiveness to those who have harmed us. What might it say about a person's spiritual condition who is unwilling to forgive others?
7. **Read Colossians 3:12-15.** What should a Church who loves Jesus look like in how they treat one another? Take a moment and *share some ways God has forgiven YOU.*
8. Our **BIG TRUTH** from the Biblical text was: **Forgiven People Forgive People.** How might our willingness to forgive others point people to Jesus?
9. What does God want YOU to do with what we studied today?
10. Share prayer needs and pray for one another.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., Matthew, vol. 3, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 157.