

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 “Forgiveness and Prayer”

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 6.

Today, we return to the Model Prayer or what is often called the Lord’s Prayer. We are now into message number 5 of 6. We’ve learned this prayer is broken down into two sections. The first section of the prayer deals with our Father and bringing Him glory as the priority of our lives, while the second section deals with our needs and our petitions to our Father. Take a look:

Section 1: Honoring the Father:

1. Hallowed be your name...
2. Your kingdom come...
3. Your will be done...

Section 2: Making Requests to the Father:

1. Give us our daily bread...
 2. **Forgive us our debts...**
 3. Deliver us from evil...
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So, here’s a summary of where we’ve been so far:

The Characteristics of Prayer:

1. **The Purpose of Prayer-Not just getting stuff, but Communion with God**
 2. **The Worship of Prayer-Realizing God is our Father, our Papa in heaven**
 3. **The Priority of Prayer-It’s not about my kingdom but His kingdom**
 4. **The Provision of Prayer-God, our Father supplies all that we need**
 5. **Forgiveness and Prayer**
 6. **The Protection of Prayer**
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Matthew 6:9-15

9 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. **10** Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread, **12** and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. **14** For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Today we are going to talk about **Forgiveness**. Just what is true forgiveness? Well, the dictionary describes it this way:

Forgiveness: *the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, lets go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, with an increased ability to wish the offender well.*

It’s been said that forgiveness is a human being’s greatest need... for apart from forgiveness, no one can enter into a relationship with God. Apart from forgiveness, human beings must pay their own penalty for their sin. And that cold hard truth reveals to us the fact that apart from forgiveness by God, human beings will spend eternity separated from Him in hell. Forgiveness, therefore, is the greatest need of the human heart. It is something that you and I must have if we are to know God, and if we are to have any hope of seeing heaven.

So then...that being said, how did we receive forgiveness? Well, through Jesus of course...



Jesus had to come to this earth to pay our sin debt. He set the pattern, and the example, and the model for our forgiveness. On the cross Jesus offered forgiveness to the very ones who had driven nails through His hands and feet... Jesus offered forgiveness, to the very ones who had spit on Him, and were even at that moment mocking Him and shouting at Him! Jesus offered forgiveness to those who had lacerated His back with a cat-of-nine-tails and to those who crushed a crown of thorns on His head. What did He say?

Father, forgive them! That's what He said! "Father, FORGIVE THEM!"

You see, Jesus is our example in offering forgiveness. After all, if you have received Jesus into your life, by faith, you had to ask for His forgiveness and accept the fact that He died in your place for your sin so that you could be forgiven in the first place. The Bible says:

Colossians 2:13-14

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

I want you to listen very carefully... I want you to hear clearly what I'm about to say. This is crucial! Are you listening, say Amen... Forgiveness is the nucleus of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the kernel of the Good News to mankind! The fact is this: if you and I don't forgive, then we, quite simply don't understand the Gospel.

You see, I am convinced the most significant issue that must constantly be addressed in the Christian life (outside of our sin), is in this area forgiveness. Why? Because we are constantly confronted with the need to forgive people who hurt us, wrong us or even unknowingly offend us. And if that's the case, (and I believe it is), you are either a forgiving person, or you are a bitter person. And what is more, AND THIS IS WHAT JESUS IS SAYING...you will not be in fellowship with your Heavenly Father if you aren't a forgiving person.

Church family, this part of the Model Prayer is so SIMPLE and so BASIC that it can be summarized really in just one word: FORGIVE! That's it! FORGIVE! What we see Jesus teaching here in this MODEL PRAYER is that we must ask God to forgive us AND in the same breath...we MUST **ALSO** BE WILLING TO FORGIVE.

Matthew 6:12

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

The word "debt" means offense or sin. And notice how it says: "have forgiven?" It's in the past, you

see. Because here's what's at stake: FELLOWSHIP. Fellowship with our Heavenly Father...

Matthew 6:14-15

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

FELLOWSHIP is the issue! That's the issue with this entire prayer remember! That's the purpose of prayer: Fellowship and communion with God! You and I will not have fellowship with God if we choose to neglect and ignore the command He has given us to forgive! But, listen...don't misunderstand...Jesus isn't saying you lose your relationship with God, no...we're sealed in Christ...but we lose close fellowship with Him.

Let me use the illustration of my family. If a child of my family sins against me and blatantly disobeys what I've asked them to do, they're not thrown out of the family. That relationship stays intact. They're still part of my family and nothing can change that... but they need to come and make things right so that the intimacy of the relationship can be restored.

Listen, let us not presume upon our Holy and Righteous Heavenly Father and think that we can be living with a bitter heart of unforgiveness and ask Him to bless us. You see, when you and I choose not to forgive someone, we've set ourselves up as a higher court than God, and folks, that's idolatry.

So many people try to pray and come before God who are carrying grudges and all kinds of bitterness. They have an angry attitude, but what they don't realize, is that they are only wounding themselves when they want to get even. It's like the story of the **Park Ranger at Yellowstone National Park** who was showing folks how ferocious grizzly bears would feed. Of course, people were watching them from a distance. He described how the grizzly bear...



...is one of the most ferocious animals on the North American continent and how a grizzly bear pretty much dominates its own scene.

Well, the folks were watching this one huge grizzly eating, and of a sudden a skunk comes out and sticks its nose right in where this huge grizzly was eating. A little boy said: "Sir, I thought you said they dominated their territory and nothing bothered a grizzly." The Park Ranger smiled as he looked down at the little boy and then back at the skunk and the grizzly eating together and he said: "Well son, I guess the cost for the Grizzly bear to get even is just too much!" You see, the grizzly bear didn't want to pay the price.

That's smart bear if you ask me! Getting even wasn't worth it and I'd tell you that grizzly bear was a lot smarter than a lot of people I know, who want to get even at their own peril!

Listen carefully, if you store up bitterness and won't forgive, then you CAN NOT be right with God. So many Christians have short-circuited the power of God in their lives because of a bitter heart

and so many unresolved conflicts with other people. You may have learned to hide it...but eventually it will come out and before it does, it's probably going to make you sick, because bitterness will eat you up!

Listen, in God's economy, as His children, forgiveness is not an option it's a way of life for the believer and follower of Jesus Christ. It's a command!

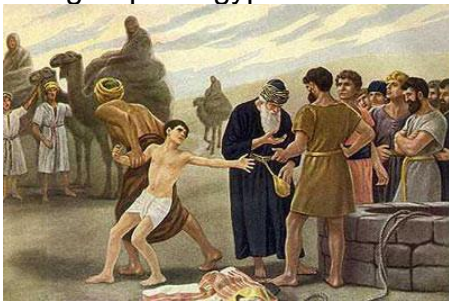
Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

And so you say, "Okay, I've got it Pastor Kevin! We've got to forgive! Got it!" And I'd say, "Good, now go do it!" And that's where the bone sticks! Offering forgiveness is so hard and we've got some really good excuses for why we should be allowed to hold unforgiveness in our hearts. But, I want to tell you about a man who had every reason in the world to hold unforgiveness but didn't. That man's name was Joseph. Not Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, but Joseph, the son of Jacob in the O.T. We're going to use the example of Joseph to help us see how to forgive.

Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 45.

Let me set the scene. Joseph was one of 12 sons and the Lord had given him great wisdom and understanding and he was able to interpret dreams. This caused great problems for his family in that the brothers became very jealous of Joseph to the point that they faked his death and sold him to a group of Egyptian traders...



...who took him down to Egypt where he was sold into slavery. He was bought by a man named Potiphar, who was in the cabinet of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph prospered in Potiphar's house until Potiphar's wife decided she liked Joseph...



...and wanted to have an affair with Joseph. Joseph refused...she got mad and framed him and Joseph ended up in prison. Yet, even in prison he prospered in that he became second only to the Warden. Eventually the Pharaoh started having dreams and no one could figure it out and through a set of circumstances that God ordained, Joseph was brought to the Pharaoh and Joseph was able to tell the meaning of the dreams and ultimately Joseph ended up second in command to the Pharaoh.

During this time a famine came throughout the world and guess what...Joseph's family had to come to Egypt to get food. And guess who they had to come to in order to get food! Yep...you guessed it! Joseph! Oh boy! Now is his chance to get even!!! They are brought in to see Him.

Genesis 45:4-8

⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Let me ask you something. Did Joseph forget what his brothers had done to him? No sir! He remembered! But he didn't hold it against them! You see, it's a myth that **Forgiveness requires forgetting**. The truth is...you can't forge, unless you've got dementia. When humans forget, we're malfunctioning aren't we? Humans weren't created by God not to forget. No! Joseph remembered what they did, but he simply didn't hold it against them.

"Forgiveness is a gift of sheer liberality that has nothing to do with forgetting. It's the canceling of a debt." John Calvin

Listen church family, forgiveness is when you remove your right to payment. It's when you remove your right to make the other person pay for what they did to you. Forgiveness is when you do like Joseph did and you mark the word: "Canceled" on the bill.

And some of you think you've done that because you say, "Yeah, I've forgiven that person." But the truth is, you just don't want to talk to that person or be around that person and you don't want anybody else you know to either. Listen, do you know what you're doing? You've not written cancelled on that bill, you are still making them pay. You're punishing them. Did you know that? You are still making them pay and punishing them by giving them the cold shoulder or if you allow yourself to be around them, you are fake and your disingenuous and God knows it.

Here's the sad thing. Some of you are doing this with your spouse. You're mad at them and you're telling them you're not and you're over it, but you aren't. You're still making them pay! Some of you are doing this right now with your kids. They did something to embarrass you and you are still angry with them. You're sarcastic and mean-spirited and you know it.

Do you understand what unforgiveness is like? **It's like you drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.** No, Joseph hadn't forgotten, but he had CHOSEN, as an act of his will not to be bitter.

Listen, Joseph saw the hand of God and His sovereignty in what He had allowed in his life. You see, when you understand the sovereignty of God, and the fact that every single second of our lives have to filter through Him before they hit us...we can accept those circumstances more easily. You can see the difficulty of those circumstances as part of the process He's allowing to grow you and sanctify you.

Joseph saw that God had sent him to Egypt, not his brothers. Joseph said, "God sent me here...yes, you wanted me dead, and you hated me to the point that you put me in a hole, sold me

into slavery...yes...I've not seen my homeland or my father in close to 25 years but, God did it. He allowed it...and He allowed it partly so I could save your life. **Watch verse 15.**

Genesis 45:15

15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

I love the artist's depiction of this scene and how it might have looked...



Folks, that's a picture of forgiveness!

But, some of you are here this morning and your heart is pretty hard. And I think I might know what your thinking! "But hey!! What a minute!! The brothers didn't even ask for forgiveness! Then never even said, 'I'm sorry!'"

And you're thinking about the person who hurt you! You're thinking, "They're not sorry! They NEED TO BE SORRY before I'm going to forgive them! They don't deserve it! They hurt me so bad and they're not even sorry!"

Well, let me ask you a question. How much sorry does it take before you forgive somebody? Do they need to crawl to you on their hands and knees? Do they need to cry? Would you like three nails. Yeah...three nails...one for each wrist and one real long one for putting one foot on top of the other? Would you like to crucify them? **Would that make you feel better?**

Listen to me. If the person you have chosen NOT to forgive is a believer, a follower of Christ, and you don't forgive that fellow believer, then you are mocking what Jesus did on the cross. How? By saying that His death on the cross was good enough for you to be forgiven of your sins, but apparently, you require just a little bit more before you will consider forgiving your fellow brother or sister in Christ. That's placing yourself over Christ! You and I must forgive our fellow brother or sister.

But, you say, "But they're not a believer! They're despicable and they're lost and they deserve Hell." Well, all of that may very well be true. But, let me ask you this: "What do you expect a lost person to act like?" A lost person, right! Listen, if they die in their sin, they're going to die and go to Hell, right? So are you going to require Hell plus your unforgiveness as their punishment? Will hell and your silent treatment warrant you to forgive them? Could it be that how you choose to treat them as a believer might show them the way to Christ? You have the opportunity to act like Jesus and say, "Father forgive, for they know not what they do."

One more question: Have you committed any new sins lately? Think about it. Any new ones come to mind? I bet you haven't and yet you expect Jesus to keep forgiving you don't you! You expect

Him to keep forgiving you of the same sins! And yet you won't forgive even one sin of that other person. Oh...don't be a hypocrite in your unforgiveness!

You see if we don't forgive, as believers in Jesus, then we're hypocrites. We can come to church and praise God for forgiving us and we can sing about His forgiveness and how we can't believe He could (like the old hymn says) "save a wretch like me." But, you sin against me and I say...no way...I can't forgive that. But, you want God to keep forgiving you! Every time! And if that's you...you're a hypocrite. And you at least need to get straight in your mind what you're doing. You are saying: forgiveness IS available for you, but not for the person who hurt you? You're saying: you deserve forgiveness, but the people who hurt you and sinned against you doesn't.

Can you see Jesus hanging on the cross?



Whose sins did He die for? Everyone's, right. He did for the sin of the world...including the sin of the person who wronged you...just like Joseph's brothers wronged him.

Listen, we're almost done...God poured out his wrath on His Son so you and I could be forgiven. Remember this...

Colossians 2:13-14

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

What is forgiveness? Remember it's:

Forgiveness: *the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, lets go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, with an increased ability to wish the offender well.*

Jesus said:

Matthew 6:12

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Church family, we can forgive because we have been forgiven. It's that simple. You and I deserve worse than anything that anyone could ever do to us. You and I deserve Hell! BUT, because God wrapped Himself in flesh and allowed Himself to be crushed by our sin offers us forgiveness...the greatest need of the human heart. Now friend, knowing all of that...why in the name of Heaven would we also NOT want to forgive?
