

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Love Keeps no Record of Wrongs

Share a story about a time when you held a grudge that now seems silly. Why did you feel like your grudge was appropriate at the time?

Brainstorm a list of some of the reasons why it is so hard to forgive people. Which of the things on the list seem like excuses to avoid practicing forgiveness?

Every one of us has a heart prone to not forgive. We hold grudges, we build up offenses against other people, we sweep things under the rug, or we write people out of our lives forever. Rarely do we do the hard work of putting on real forgiveness, especially as a character trait that we try to model consistently. In Colossians 3, though, Paul included forgiveness in his list of godly character traits that children of God must put on, and he based that trait on the very forgiveness of God toward us, which can't be argued with.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:13.

What stands out to you about the phrases Paul used to describe relationships in Colossians 3:13?

What do you understand “accepting one another” to mean, and how is it connected to forgiveness? Why is accepting someone else, despite their behavior, an essential element of forgiveness?

How does Paul's call to forgiveness in this verse help you understand why this is an important trait for Christians to model?

When Paul calls us to accept one another, he means that Christians are to go beyond quiet resignation positively to forgive whatever grievances they may have against one another. Believers have been fully forgiven by Christ (Col. 2:13-14), and the forgiven are obligated to become forgivers. The standard for this forgiveness is Christ Himself. Paul made this command especially clear in another of his letters.

Paul's words to us here come in the form of a command. Why do we treat forgiveness as something we have the choice to do or not do? Do Christians really have that choice? Explain.

What are we to do if we have a complaint with someone else? How does that stand in contrast to the way you typically respond if you have a complaint against someone? Forgiveness does not come naturally to us. It must be taught, learned, and accepted. For Christians, we have no option but to forgive if we wish to live faithfully to Jesus Christ. However, we often think that we have the choice to not forgive. While technically this is true, unforgiveness arises from sin. We must remember that when we were sinful, God forgave us and gave Himself for us. Unforgiveness does not honor Jesus, nor your brothers and sisters in Christ.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:32.

What does the gospel teach us about the importance of forgiveness in the life of a Christian?

Why is forgiveness really a spiritual issue? What does our willingness or unwillingness to forgive reveal about our hearts?

How are compassion and forgiveness related? As your compassion for other people grows, how does your willingness and ability to forgive grow as well?

Forgiving is literally “acting with grace,” and forgiving one another is certainly one of the best ways to extend undeserved favor. Paul pointed out specifically that this is a God-like quality. Because He forgave in Christ, we are to extend forgiveness to others. The more we reflect on and grow in our understanding of how much God loves us and how much He has forgiven us of, the more we want to treat others the same way.

Is there anyone in your life who you need to forgive right now? What is one step you can take toward forgiving him or her?

Describe a time when you saw bitterness wreak havoc on you and a relationship in your life. What did you learn about the importance of forgiveness through that experience? What are some practical ways we can challenge each other to put on forgiveness in our daily lives? How can we ask people to accept the forgiveness Jesus offers if we are unforgiving as His servants?

PRAYER

Thank God that He graciously gives what we cannot earn or work for. Pray that God would continually remind you of His grace, so that you may trust Him more and grow in your forgiveness of others. Pray that God would guide your actions daily, particularly as it relates to forgiving those who wrong you.