

## Forgiven People Forgive

Close your eyes. I am going to say a word and when I do what or who comes to your mind? "Forgiveness".

It may be that your mind went immediately to the forgiveness that God has so graciously and freely provided for you. If so, that is great! But, my guess is for many of us here today, it went another direction.

Did you instantly think about a person who has hurt you? Did it bring back heartaches or memories from your past? Did it stir some deep wounds that you have carried for months, years or even a lifetime? If it occurred years ago, is the pain still fresh like it just happened recently? Did it bring thoughts of resentment or revenge?

*Forgiveness* can be one of the most difficult and most misunderstood topics in the Bible. Not only can we struggle with understanding what it truly is, but often we don't realize the depth of affect it can have on our relationship with God and our relationships with others. Our lives can never be unchanged once we truly experience it and our lives will never be all that God desires for us when we withhold it.

Last week Matthew 6:11. "Give us today our daily bread".

This week: **Matthew 6:12 (NLT) And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**

Jesus instructs his disciples, and us, to build into our prayers a request for God to forgive in the same way that we have forgiven others who have hurt us.

The first step of that prayer is acknowledging that we need God's mercy. That we mess up. That we need help in following his plan for our lives. Confession, and the forgiveness that follows, helps remove the shame & guilt that can immobilize us and keep us from living a healthy & productive spiritual life every day.

The second step is the tough one. It's forgiving those people in our own homes, in the community, in church & even our friends.

In God's "economy" it should look like this: *Forgiven People Forgive People*.

Would you be totally comfortable saying to God: "Father, treat me as I treat others?"

That makes us squirm. Can make us uncomfortable. Justify things.

**Refusing to Forgive is Refusing to Remember.**

What is forgiveness? What is Forgiveness NOT? (What does that really mean for me and for others?) Why should I forgive others? Am I required to forgive others when they hurt me? How can I forgive someone who has hurt me or hurt someone I love?

**Forgiveness is a deliberate decision of the will.**

Forgiveness in the Bible is a “release” or a “dismissal” of something. The forgiveness we have in Jesus involves the release of sinners from God’s just penalty and the complete dismissal of all charges against us.

Forgiveness is not about our feelings. When someone hurts you, do you feel like forgiving them? NO! It’s a deliberate decision. It’s a choice. Feelings often follow our decisions.

We don’t forgive someone because they deserve it. No one deserves to be forgiven. It is a deliberate decision to show someone mercy and grace. It is a choice to not hold something against another person, despite what he or she have done.

“How can I can forgive them for what they did to me? I understand it’s a deliberate decision of my will, that’s it’s a choice, but I don’t have the strength to do it”.

“I can’t do it.” You’re right. We can’t do it on our own. The good news is that we don’t have to.

**Matthew 6:10 (NLT) May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

Forgiven People Forgive People, but they don’t have to do it on their own. You and I need God’s help to respond in forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

Forgiveness is NOT:

#### **Minimizing the Hurt**

“It’s no big deal”. Yes, it is. Acknowledge it. What they did hurt you and caused you pain. Don’t try to minimize it. If it didn’t hurt, there’s no need to ask for forgiveness.

#### **Instantly Restoring Trust**

Trust is built over time and can be lost in one decision. When someone hurts us, we should forgive them, but it doesn’t mean we are obligated to instantly trust them again.

#### **Restoration Without Repentance**

Forgiveness does not mean the reconnection of the relationship. Forgiveness is what we do when we are hurt by someone. For the relationship to be restored something important must take place: **Repentance**.

Many understand the term *repentance* to mean “a turning from sin.” Regretting sin and turning from it is related to repentance, but it is not the precise meaning of the word.

In the Bible, the word *repent* means “to change one’s mind.” The Bible also tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions.

The full biblical definition of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.

## Release of Consequences

Sin has consequences. Period. Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows”.

If Jesus paid the price for my sin, why do I still have to suffer the consequences of my sin? Temporal effects of sin versus eternal consequences of sin.

*Original sin* means we live in a sinful world. No avoiding those consequences.

*Natural consequences*: stealing, speeding, lying. Sowing and reaping.

*Disciplinary consequences*. Some of sin’s consequences are the result of God’s treating us as a father should his children. There’s a difference between a *penalty* for sin and *discipline* for sin. As God’s children, we experience discipline designed to guide us back to the right path.

God allows us to experience some of the temporal consequences of sin to show His love for us. If God never disciplined His straying children, He would not be a good Father. If we were never disciplined or never suffered the consequences for our wrong action, we would never learn right from wrong. We tend to learn from our mistakes more readily than we learn from our successes.

He allows us to experience the *temporal* consequences of sin (for our own good). But He has saved us from the *eternal* consequences of sin.

## Why Should I Forgive Others?

### God Forgave you

Share about my house down payment.

We will never have to forgive any other person more than God has already forgiven us.

**Matthew 18: 23 – 33 (NLT)** “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. <sup>24</sup> In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. <sup>25</sup> He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ <sup>27</sup> Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

<sup>28</sup> “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

<sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. <sup>30</sup> But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

<sup>31</sup> “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. <sup>32</sup> Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’

The first servant forgot that he had been forgiven of ALL and that he should have forgiven all. Refusing to Forgive is Refusing to Remember (what God has given us)

### We’ll Need It Again

We are not going to live a life of perfection. We are going to mess up and at times, it may hurt someone. Don’t withhold what we you and I will depend on sooner rather than later.

### Unforgiveness Grows Uncontrollably

Resentment held and not released damages others, but it damages us more. It won’t change the past, and it won’t solve the problem. Resentment keeps you stuck in a rut and won’t let you move forward.

Ephesians 4:31 – 32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

When we are refusing to forgive and refusing to remember it demonstrates resentment, bitterness and anger, none of which are the traits of a growing Christ – follower.

Immediately after the Lord’s Prayer we find this bomb – shell:

Matthew 6: 14 – 15 (NLT) “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

We may not realize how committed God is to building and maintaining a loving community, or a family. When he adopts us into his family he wants us to carry our relationship with him into our relationship with others.

### We cannot receive what we are unwilling to give.

This verse teaches that our relationship with God is damaged if we refuse to forgive those who have sinned against us & wronged us.

*If we refuse to do our part, we cut ourselves off from God's part.* The only thing that can cause God not to forgive our sins is our refusal to forgive the sins of others.

The forgiveness I am talking about here has to do with our fellowship with God, rather than our relationship with him.

When we refuse to forgive others, it affects our fellowship with God, our closeness and our intimacy with him. It hinders our prayers and our prayer life. God will not hear our prayers unless we show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness to others.

Ever try to pray when you were withholding forgiveness from someone? We CANNOT walk with God in true fellowship if we refuse to forgive others.

The main thing God created us for was to enjoy continuous fellowship with him. When we refuse to do our part, we cut ourselves off from God's part and that fellowship is messed up.

Refusing to Forgive is Refusing to Remember (what God has given us)

### **How do we forgive others?**

#### **Forgiveness Formula: Rely and Remember.**

Rely on God's strength as we pray "Your Will be done". Have free reign in every corner of my life. In every dark place. In every situation where I am finding it hard to forgive those who have hurt me.

Remember how much God has forgiven you. Me. Us. Because of what Jesus did on the cross our sins have been completely forgiven. We have a clean slate.

Refusing to Forgive Others is refusing to remember what we've been given. When we forget how much we've been forgiven, it makes it easier to not forgive people in our lives who have hurt us.

But when we remember the amazing grace and mercy that Jesus shows us through his forgiveness, it helps us extend love and forgiveness to others. Even when they don't deserve it or ask for it.

No one gives forgiveness better than a person who is deeply persuaded that he needs it himself and it has been graciously supplied by a heavenly Father of grace & mercy.

When we remember how far we fall short, we are more forgiving to others who fall short, and we want them to experience the same grace that is their only hope.

Where have you been holding on to past hurts at an unhealthy level? Who have you been withholding forgiveness from? Spouse? Friend? Parent? Child? Elders of TBC?

Refusing to Forgive is Refusing to Remember (what God has given us). Will you RELY on God's power and REMEMBER His forgiveness, to start the process of forgiveness today?

## Bridge Group Questions

1. What stood out to you in this week's message?
2. Who or what comes to your mind when you hear the word "forgiveness"? How would you define forgiveness? What is the biblical definition?
3. Have you ever asked someone to forgive you? What about a time someone asked you to forgive them? Which situation was more difficult for you? Why do you think that was?
4. Read Matthew 6:12. Which is more difficult for you, asking God for forgiveness or forgiving others when they hurt you? Explain. Why do you think Jesus instructed us to pray in this way? Regarding the act of forgiveness, would you be comfortable saying to God, "Father, treat me as I treat others"? Why or why not?
5. "Refusing to Forgive is Refusing to Remember (what God did for us)." How would you describe God's forgiveness? How do we receive it? What were some things mentioned about what forgiveness is not? Which one hit home for you?
6. What were some of the reasons listed for why we should forgive others? Which one resonated the most with you and why?
7. Read Ephesians 4:31 – 32. How have you seen the characteristics mentioned in verse 31, mess up relationships with others? What is the cure for overcoming bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and slander in our relationships with others?
8. According to Matthew 6:14 – 15, we cannot receive what we are unwilling to give. How can resentment and unforgiveness negatively affect our fellowship with God? Have you experienced that in your own life? With others? Share about it.
9. Why do you think God is so committed to maintaining a loving community of believers? Why is forgiveness so necessary in our relationships?
10. What is the forgiveness formula? In what relationship(s) do you need to start applying it today? What is holding you back from taking that step? How could things change if you do?

