

GROWING — Empowered to Pray IV

| One of the greatest needs we all have is forgiveness.

Matthew 6:9 - 15

This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

**And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

The New International Version. (2011). (Mt 6:9–15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The Need For Forgiveness

Speaking from parenting experience, Pastor Danielle explains that the need for forgiveness far surpasses the need for potty training, learning how to walk, and growing up. Even now with teenagers, the need for forgiveness is still ever present.

In all of our families, we experience thousands of opportunities to need and give forgiveness.

Methods of Dealing With Forgiveness Opportunities

One way to deal with misgivings or hurts and opportunities is to cancel those who hurt you. Write them out of your life and publicly shame them and dedicate all of your energy to their demise.

Another way to deal with unforgiveness is to let it fester in your soul and don't deal with it. Just push it down forever until it explodes in anger at some later point.

A third way is to withhold forgiveness until they meet your standard of a sincere apology. IF they don't do that, continue to hold onto your grudge until they deserve your forgiveness.

Each of these three pieces of popular wisdom are quite self-destructive. The bitterness that results is like cancer that eats the host. Maya Angelou wrote something like that, and Mandela advised that holding onto bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

| The way of true forgiveness is highlighted by the Lord's prayer.

Forgiveness is the release on the part of the offended party that any expectation that a debt will be repaid or any punishment. It does not condone behavior, but releases it.

But how can we release people from punishment without minimizing or excusing sin?

Forgiveness as Part of God's Nature

Exodus 34: 6 - 7

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

The New International Version. (2011). (Ex 34:6-7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

When we forgive, we have the opportunity to reflect upon who God is. God's nature is about forgiveness and justice at the same time.

He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

In our process of forgiving others, we can trust that the Lord's place is to judge, and it is our nature to release those from the justice that we do not know how to mete out.

- As part of being an image bearer, we value justice, but as universal common experience shows, if one gets hit, they hit back harder. We do not know how to adequately mete justice out to others. This is an opportunity for us to trust him and let him be the ultimate judge of the earth.

Why is Forgiveness Necessary?

Jesus puts at the center of our prayer life: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

We are meant to ask for forgiveness and give forgiveness every day. Matthew clarifies:

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

We are all in debt — equally in debt needing forgiveness.

It's not that we can earn forgiveness by forgiving others, but we show whether we are forgiven and demonstrate our need for forgiveness and the Gospel's power in our life when we forgive others. If we have received forgiveness, we will give forgiveness away.

What Do we Need to Forgive?

1. We need a realistic humility for our own sin. We tend to minimize our own sin and maximize the sin of theirs (See also: Fundamental attribution error).
 - You can only withhold forgiveness from someone if you feel superior to them. As in, you could never "stoop to their level." We remain blinded by pride in this state.
 - Paul demonstrates for us that he is the chief of sinners.

2. We need to realize the radical grace that has been extended, that cost the King of the Universe his blood to cover you.
 - You don't realize your own need until someone fully sins against you. Those who are forgiven much actually forgive much.
 - Those who are forgiven little forgive little.

Understanding Sin

Sin can be well understood when we frame it in terms of relationship. Sin in one definition is whatever breaks relationship. Relationship with others is more immediately realized, but we must also realize it concurrently breaks relationship with God.

Relational damage is considered divine treason.

This initiates a transaction that needs to be paid: a debt of guilt and injustice.

We sense this when we are desiring for justice to be met. This was demonstrated clearly in Leviticus 16 when one goat must be slaughtered, whose blood covers the temple of God to cleanse the land where the sin occurred, and another goat on whom guilt is placed to be sent into the desert to be given to destruction. (The sacrificial goat and the scape goat).

Jesus was the better sacrifice and the better scapegoat: Jesus uses both his blood to cover the earth, and his body to carry our guilt and shame in order to pay the debt of guilt and injustice.

| The guilt is paid; the debt is no longer owed.

If we accept this reality, we will be able to see how much we ourselves need forgiveness and also drop the hatchet in our hands towards the others who have wronged us.

The Blinding Effect of Sin

When others commit offenses against us, they are most often blinded by their own motives or by their own sin, and *sometimes* the best posture for us to take is to follow the example of our King: "Forgive them because they don't know what they're doing."

Not to excuse their sin, but to grow up out of our immaturity and embracing forgiveness.

To choose to forgive without minimizing sin is a choice to let go of bitterness and resentment and a desire for personal vengeance and give it over to God. And praying for God to have mercy and healing for the long term effects that their actions may have in your life.

Forgiveness is a powerful choice.

Should you ever find yourself the victim of other people's unforgiveness, bitterness, and insecurities. Remember, things could be worse — you could be them. — Anonymous Author



Our King invites us to pray forgiveness into our lives every day. That's how being a Christian works under King Jesus. Release for us and release for those who sin against us and trust God with the judgment.

Walking Forgiveness out

- Father, thank you for forgiving me for all of my sin. Because you have forgiven me, I also forgive.
- I forgive them for the things _____ failed to do, or for what _____ did.
- I forgive them for all the pain and suffering _____ caused me. Jesus, you died for me, and you died for them. I put _____ in your hands. I'm not going to minimize mine or their offense; help me to fully forgive them and release them.
- God, bless _____ and save them if they're not saved, and to humble them.