

LESSON 13

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST

Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Matthew 6:14-15; Psalm 103:8-14

EPHESIANS 4:32 · PSALM 103:8-14

Reading before class: Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15 and Psalm 103.

This is the last lesson of the quarter and it is the one everything else has been pointing toward. If this is your first Sunday with us, you have not missed anything you need. This lesson stands on its own and you can work every question in it without having been here before.

For twelve weeks we have talked about what we owe one another. Today we look at the pattern all of it is copied from.

1. Think of a time somebody forgave you for something real. Do not write what it was. Write what you expected to happen instead.

2. In your own words, what does God actually do with a sin He forgives? Where does it go? We will come back to this.

THE THREE WORDS AT THE END OF BOTH VERSES

3. Read Ephesians 4:32. Write the three commands Paul gives.

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4. Now write the phrase that ends the verse, the comparison Paul attaches.

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5. Read Colossians 3:13. Write the comparison that ends that verse.

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6. Those two are almost the same sentence in two different letters. Notice what the comparison is NOT doing. It is not telling you how many times or how much. What is it telling you?

7. In your opinion, why would God give us a pattern to copy instead of a rule to keep?

WHAT COMES RIGHT BEFORE IT

8. Read Ephesians 4:31, the verse just before. What six things are to be put away?
9. So verse 31 takes something off and verse 32 puts something on. Why would Paul refuse to leave a man with only the taking off?
10. Read Colossians 3:13 again, the first part. What comes before the forgiving in that verse?
11. In your own words, what is the difference between bearing with somebody and forgiving them? You will need both.

THE VERSE THAT MAKES PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE

12. Read Matthew 6:14. Write what Jesus promises.
13. Read Matthew 6:15. Write the other half.
14. That is a hard sentence and Jesus said it plainly. What does He connect to what?
15. Look Matthew 6:9-13 first. What has Jesus just finished teaching, and why would He attach this to it?

- 16.** In your opinion, is Jesus saying we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving? If not, what is He saying? Give your reasons.
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THREE COMPARISONS IN A ROW

Now turn to Psalm 103. David stacks three comparisons back to back and every one of them is measuring something about God.

- 17.** Read Psalm 103:11. What two things are being compared, and what is being measured?
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- 18.** Read Psalm 103:12. What two things are being compared here, and what has been moved?
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- 19.** Read Psalm 103:13. What two things are compared in this one?
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- 20.** Notice how verse 13 begins. It uses the same two words Paul used at the end of Ephesians 4:32. Write them.
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- 21.** Think about verse 12 for a minute. Why east and west? North and south both run out at a pole. What happens if you keep going east?
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- 22.** So how far has God moved our transgressions from us, and what does that distance say about whether He goes back and gets them?
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HOW HE HAS NOT DEALT WITH US

- 23.** Read Psalm 103:10. David says two things God has NOT done. Write both.
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24. Read Psalm 103:8-9. List what God is called, and then what He will not do forever.

25. Read Psalm 103:14. Why does God deal with us that way, according to David?

26. Put verse 14 beside Ephesians 4:32. He knows what we are made of, and He forgives us anyway, and then He says forgive each other the same way. What does that ask of you toward the person you find hardest?

LET'S SUMMARIZE HERE

1. Both Paul's commands end by pointing at God, not at a quantity.
2. Psalm 103 says the distance He put between us and our sins has no end to it.
3. He does it knowing exactly what we are, and He does not go back and get them.
4. Therefore Christian forgiveness is not a rule we keep. It is a pattern we copy, and the pattern is God's own conduct toward us.

WORD STUDY · AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST

The picture: David does not compare it to any fixed distance. He picks two directions that run away from each other and never meet.

What it means in plain words: there is no number. North and south have ends to them, since a man walking north eventually stands at the top and starts walking south. East and west have no such point. A man walking east goes east forever.

Why it matters here: David could have said God removed our sins a very great way. He said something with no measurement in it at all.

And note this: the verse does its own work. It says as far, and then it names the one distance that cannot be closed.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Matthew 6:15 says if I do not forgive, God will not forgive me. Does that mean I am earning it?"

That verse troubles people and it should be answered rather than hurried past.

Start with what the whole quarter has shown. Nothing in Ephesians 4:32 or Colossians 3:13 puts you first in line. Both verses say to forgive just as God forgave you, which means His forgiving already happened and yours is the copy. You cannot copy something that has not gone first. So earning is ruled out by the grammar before we ever get to Matthew 6.

Now read Matthew 6:15 for what it says. Jesus is not describing a transaction where your forgiving buys God's. He is describing a man who has received something enormous and will not pass along something small. We looked at that man three weeks ago in Matthew 18. He was released from a debt he could never pay and then he choked a man over a hundred days' wages, and his release did not survive it.

So the honest answer is this. A person who has genuinely taken in what God did for him will forgive, imperfectly and sometimes slowly, but he will. A settled refusal to forgive anybody, ever, is evidence that the thing was never received in the first place. Jesus is not putting a price on grace. He is telling you what grace looks like when it has been received.

And if you are here this morning and the refusing is where you are, that is worth saying out loud to somebody. Come find me.

FOR YOUR LIFE

27. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

28. Psalm 103:12 says God removed our transgressions that far away. Do you talk to yourself about your own forgiven sins as though He did?

29. Ephesians 4:32 says to forgive just as God forgave you. Name the way God has forgiven you that you find hardest to copy. Not the person. The way.

- 30.** In your opinion, after thirteen weeks: what is the one thing this congregation would look most different for, if we actually did what we have studied?
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THIS WEEK

Two things, and both of them are small enough to do.

- 31.** Write down one name. Just for you. Nobody will ask for it.
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- 32.** Write the first small step, and put a day on it. A phone call, a text, a sentence at a door. Not the whole thing. The first step.
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If you are here for the first time this morning, there is one more thing.

Everything in this lesson is about copying what God has already done for people who are in Christ. If you have never obeyed the gospel, the pattern is not yours to copy yet, and that is the more urgent question. Ephesians 4:32 says God forgave you in Christ. That is where the forgiveness is. If you want to know how a person comes to be in Christ, ask me before you leave today, or ask anyone here. Nobody will think it is a strange question.

That is the end of this quarter. Thank you for working it. Keep this book, because you wrote things in it in September that you will want to read again.

Works Cited

The word study boxes in this workbook name their sources in short form. The full entries are here.
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Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition. The money values in Lesson 10 are the NASB translators' own marginal notes.

Greek and Hebrew lemma, root, sense and grammatical data were from Logos Bible Software, 4 Aug. 2026.

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