

Extending Mercy Through a Forgiving Heart

Fuel Your Faith 14

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How do we respond when we are on the wrong end of someone else's irresponsible behavior?

After we've been wronged, how do we respond when the other party could care less about how much --- or how deeply --- they have hurt us?

Today, on Fuel Your Faith, we'll learn from a passage in [Matthew 18](#) that will help us answer these questions. It's all really such a challenge. We must all look to better in the realm of forgiveness, so we can do what Jesus did.

[Matthew 18](#) has been said to present the childlikeness of the believer. And this chapter serves as the foundation of life together with other believers inside the church. Jesus outlines some very important attitudes and principles that lead to the proper function and unity inside the body:

- 18.3-4 - the one who humbles himself -- this one is the greatest in the kingdom.
- 18.5 - how we treat fellow believers is how we treat Jesus. We treat other believers with the same care and tenderness as we would a little child.
- 18.6-9 - we protect fellow believers as we would a little child. It would be better off being dead than leading someone else into sin.
- 18.10 - We do not despise our brothers and sisters. Over the next few verses, Jesus tells us we shouldn't look down on them because God cares about them. When we hurt one of His children, we're hurting Him.
- 18.15-17 - We receive discipline as children. And the focus here is on restoration. When we sin, others are to come along side to correct and restore. The aim is to win your brother. And once this has happened, we are to forgive.

And that is the focus of our text in [Matthew 18.21-22](#). Just like children forgive, so are we to forgive.

Do you find it easier to forgive adults or children?

We understand children do wrong things. We understand they are often immature, growing up, and still learning right behavior. But what about grown adults who do us wrong, take advantage of us, are mean to us, or stab us in the back?

Will we respond with mercy?

Let's look at [Matthew 18.21](#): "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as **seven** times?" This is really a good question, by the way. If we restore a person and then they go right back out and sin again, how many times do we forgive?

i.e., does forgiveness have a limit? Is there ever a time we can say, “that’s it, you’ve gone too far. I’m not going to forgive you.”

Now, Peter thought he was being beyond generous when he said ... *as many as seven times*? I think it is hard for most of us to find it within ourselves to forgive one time. Forgiveness is almost outright contrary to our nature.

Now, let’s look at verse 22. Jesus says, ““I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but **seventy** times seven.” 70 x 7. Peter must be standing there in stunned silence. He would not have known what to say. Jesus is saying there is to be no limit to forgiveness. It’s an indefinite number. You might remember the 6th beatitude in [Matthew 5.7](#) where Jesus says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Connecting this principle to forgiveness we can confidently say If a person sinned against us 500 times in a day ... they should be forgiven.

Now, most importantly ... why do we forgive?

1. **Because of Jesus’ example.** [Ephesians 4.32](#) says: “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.”
2. **Because it is part of our new character.** To our godliness we are to add: “brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with **love**.” This is part of our Christian virtue. It’s in our new character to forgive.
3. **Because it frees us from roots of bitterness.** The Hebrew writer said, “Make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no **root of bitterness** springs up, causing trouble and defiling many.”
4. And finally, **we forgive because if we don’t forgive, we will receive no mercy.** And that’s the point of the rest of [Matthew 18](#). Look closely at verse 33. We should have mercy on others just as God has had mercy on us.

I love Chad Sychtysz’s writing where he says, “Christ did not purchase your soul with His blood so you could languish in “what ifs” and “how comes” and “I don’t understand.” He does not have to explain what happened to you; He does not have to apologize for not preventing it. Whatever happened (or will happen) to you is meant to make you a better person, not a bitter or broken one.”

Today will you:

- Fill your heart with forgiveness
- Do what is in your power to rectify the situation
- Turn the matter over to God.
- Trust God to compensate you for your losses.
- Let God be the one who deals with those who refuse to take responsibility for how they wronged you.
- Embrace your service to the king

True love moves with mercy.

Thank you for listening to Fuel Your Faith. Join us again tomorrow as we talk more about the need to demonstrate the mercy of Christ.