

:: summary

Forgiveness is hard. Unforgiveness is equally hard. Forgiving when there is no remorse, no repentance is harder still. The piercing question in Jesus' Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (*Matthew 18:33*) challenges us: "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In forgiving others, we choose to cancel the debt they owe us for the pain they have caused.

:: explore and discuss

Unforgiveness is hard to shake off. When we have been hurt by another, we hold unforgiveness tightly, usually waiting for the score to be settled, the wrongdoer to be punished, the debt to be paid.

Think of a time where you lived with an unforgiving spirit. What did you want to happen that would allow you to turn toward forgiveness? How did it feel in your soul as you held on to unforgiveness?

In the message, Pastor Mike described the impact of sin including the fact that sin violates human relationships and creates a debt – perhaps external (pay for the item you broke) and almost always internal (pay for my pain).

Do you agree with Pastor Tim Keller's statement, "If a person has wronged you, they owe you, and the currency is pain." Why or why not?

Read Luke 17:3-4, Matthew 6:14-15

Why do you think Jesus is so insistent about extending forgiveness? Said another way, by teaching you to be a forgiver, what do you think Jesus desires for you?

How does unforgiveness over a past wrong emotionally imprison us?

Read Colossians 2:13-14

How does knowing that Jesus has cancelled your debt help you to release the debt someone else owes you?

Read Hebrews 12:15

This text warns against allowing a bitter root to grow up and cause trouble in your life. Can you describe a time when a bitterness (or anger, or shame or vengeance) took root in your life? How did it impact you? How did (or do) you deal with it?

:: make it personal

It is one thing to affirm the truth that our debt has been cancelled and therefore we should act in the same way toward people who sin against us. It is quite another thing to move from affirming truth to living it. What is specifically needed in your life to help you better do the hard work of forgiveness?

Is there a current situation in your life where someone has grieved your spirit? What do you need from God in order to move into the freedom of forgiveness?

:: pray

In Christ, you are free of your debt – give thanks! Pray for each other in light of your discussion on forgiveness.