

SUNDAY MESSAGE

THE POWER OF
FORGIVING
PRAYER

Pastor Keith Nix

THE LIFT CHURCH

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THE TEXT

MATTHEW 6:9-15

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

MATTHEW 6:12, 14-15

This series has walked through the power of prayer when things look impossible, simple prayer, bold prayer, praying for others, and God-centered prayer. Today we come to a subject that touches every one of us: the power of forgiving prayer.

Jesus taught us to ask for provision, direction, and protection — but He leaned in hardest on forgiveness. **We all need to be forgiven, and we all must forgive.** Sometimes the most difficult prayer isn't "Lord, give me a miracle" — it's "Lord, help me to forgive."

POINT ONE

FORGIVENESS MEANS **RELEASING THE DEBT**

The Greek word for "forgive" means to send away — to remit a debt, to stop demanding it be paid. When someone wrongs us, we feel they owe us an apology, an explanation, a chance to make things right. Often they truly do. But forgiveness surrenders my claim to revenge and refuses to make collecting that debt the purpose of my life.

Forgiveness does not call evil good, and it does not mean justice no longer matters. It means I release vengeance into God's hands — and, where something is criminal, into the hands of the courts — and stop letting the unpaid debt govern my heart.

Forgiveness doesn't change the past, but it changes how I carry the past into my future.

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POINT TWO

BEGINS WITH A PRAYER FOR HELP

In 1947, Corrie ten Boom — who lost her father and sister in Nazi captivity — was speaking in Munich about God's forgiveness when a former Ravensbrück guard approached her, said he had become a Christian, and asked, "Will you forgive me?" She had just preached forgiveness, yet her heart was cold.

She bowed her head and prayed, "Jesus, help me. I can lift my hand, but I need You to supply the feeling." As she took his hand, warmth flowed through her: "I forgive you, brother, with all my heart."

Forgiveness is not an emotion; it is an act of the will. It didn't begin with a feeling or an explanation — it began with a prayer. You don't have to manufacture a feeling. Just bring God your hurt, your resistance, and your anger, and say, "I'm willing to be willing."

POINT THREE

LET GO OF THE ROPE

Years later, Christian friends turned against Corrie and wounded her deeply. She forgave them, yet found herself waking at night rehearsing the offense. Her pastor pointed to a church bell: when someone lets go of the rope, the bell keeps swinging and echoing for a while.

When we forgive, we take our hand off the rope — but if we've pulled on a grievance for a long time, the old thoughts will echo. A returning memory doesn't mean your forgiveness was insincere; it's a reminder to pray, not an invitation to pull the rope again.

Forgiveness isn't just one decisive moment — it requires repeated surrender. Unforgiveness also puts a barrier between us and the Father, and a root of bitterness will spring up and ruin everything.

NEVER MORE LIKE JESUS THAN WHEN I FORGIVE

On the cross Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34) — while they were crucifying Him. Stephen prayed, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60) as he was stoned. Neither used pain as an excuse to abandon forgiveness.

Praying for someone doesn't mean approving what they did. It means refusing to let their wrongdoing determine who I become. Forgiveness is also not the same as trust: trust is rebuilt through truthfulness and consistent behavior, boundaries are still wise, and forgiveness never requires silence about abuse.

- 1 Name the person before God** — without asking Him to punish them.
- 2 Make the decision by faith**, even without the feeling: "I forgive. I let it go."
- 3 Receive mercy and extend it:** "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."