

GENEROSITY

Responding To God's Radical Grace In Community

LESSON 2 – GENEROSITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

“So, watch yourselves. “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”⁶ He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you. ⁷ Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? ⁸ Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

Luke 17:3-10 (NIV)

We need to understand that in Christ we receive forgiveness for sins, which enables us to be generous in our relationships and forgive others without limit.

1. Generosity means living for God and others, not for **yourself**.

It embodies a lifestyle shaped by a deep conviction that in Christ we find true riches and abounding treasure.

2. Generous people do not use others for **personal gain**, demand that their rights be upheld at all costs, or hold grudges against those who offend them.

Instead, the gospel changes their attitudes toward others so that they are able to constantly wipe the slate clean and eliminate all record of wrongs.

3. Generous people **cancel** debts and absorb the cost themselves. (CEO Robert F. Smith with Vista Equity Partners)

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Jesus outlines a specific order for forgiving others:

- A. **Rebuke**
- B. **Forgive**
- C. **Keep forgiving.**

FORGIVENESS

1. Biblical forgiveness is not simply overlooking evil or wrong. Rather, it involves pointing out the offense committed and correcting it, without demanding repayment or retribution.
2. Forgiveness is difficult! In order to forgive, you must first acknowledge the extent of the wrong and the fact that someone must pay to repair the wrong, and then choose to bear the wrong yourself rather than make the other person pay the price.
3. Jesus turns the typical standard of forgiveness by instructing us to forgive seven times a day.

This is not a literal seven times: rather, Jesus is saying that every time someone sins against you, we should forgive.

We are called to forgive again and again without limit, to “forgive as the Lord forgave you” (*Colossians 3:13 (NIV)* “*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*”

We are commanded to forgive anyone and everyone, even those who show no signs of repentance. (*Mark 11:25 (NIV)* “*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*”

4. The forgiveness God offers us through Jesus radically transforms the way we extend forgiveness to others.

Because of sin, we are infinitely indebted to God; but like may indentured servants, we have no means to earn our freedom because it is too enormous.

[”]⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” *Luke 17:5 (NIV)*

The disciples realized that even the most religious and compassionate people of their day could not possibly live up to the standard of forgiveness that Jesus had commanded.

- The teaching of Judaism at the time was that three times was enough to show a forgiving spirit. If a person committed a sin, he was forgiven the first, second and third time, but the fourth time he was not forgiven.

“Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? ⁸ Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? ⁹ Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” *Luke 17:7-10 (NIV)*

- A servant’s job is to do the master’s will.
- A servant who is unwilling to do his job implicitly views himself not as a servant, but a master.
- When we do not forgive, we are deliberately refusing our duty as servants and are setting ourselves up as our own masters.