

THIS WEEKEND

at The Crossing



The Lord's Prayer: Forgiveness
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our four-week series called "The Lord's Prayer." In this third study, we are talking about a request of God that we bring before Him in prayer - forgiveness. It means to release, to let someone leave or to let them go. A quote from Lewis Smedes says, "Forgiveness is releasing a prisoner and discovering the prisoner was you."

SCRIPTURE¹

Matthew 6:9-15 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For *if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Luke 11:4 Forgive us our *sins*, for we also forgive everyone who *sins against us*.

Genesis 4:24 If Cain is avenged *seven times*, then Lamech *seventy-seven times*."

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, *how many times* shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to *seven times*?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but *seventy-seven times*. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him *ten thousand bags of gold* was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the *debt*. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a *hundred silver coins*. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that *debt* of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had *mercy* on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you *forgive* your brother or sister from your *heart*."

OBSERVATION

The Lord's Prayer is found in two places in the New Testament: Luke Chapter 11 and Matthew Chapter 6. There are slight differences between them, but both address the issues of asking God

¹ All Scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated.

to forgive us and helping us to forgive others who sin against us. This prayer is a template for how Jesus wants us to pray. Matthew's version uses the term "debts" because he was a financial guy – a tax collector. He tells us that when someone sins against us they become in debt to us. Forgiving means to set someone free from a debtor relationship – we are letting them go.

QUESTION: When has someone sinned against you? How did you react?

Jesus also addresses guilt because of our sin and resentment toward those who sin against us. He says that when we are forgiven, our guilt is removed and when we forgive, our resentment is removed. In the parable about the unmerciful servant, Jesus explains how God, Who is merciful reacts when we are not. A man was in debt to his master for lots of money. He begged for mercy and received mercy as the debt was forgiven. Then he encountered a man who owed him much less and who also begged for mercy, but was refused and sent to prison until he paid his debt. When the master heard of this, he reimposed the original debt and consequent punishment.

QUESTION: When have you forgiven someone who refused to forgive someone else?

APPLICATION

God is the King of staggering generosity and mercy and we are the servants with an unpayable debt! Every time we hold a grudge or lie or are unkind or are sarcastic, or mistreat our spouse, or are judgmental, or we gossip or slander or envy we increase our unpayable debt! Matthew would call it spiritual bankruptcy.

QUESTION: When has your behavior caused your unpayable debt total to rise?

So, how often must we forgive? Peter asks Jesus this question and hears "Seventy-seven times" (and in some Scriptures the answer is "seventy times seven") – endlessly – completely. We know that the number seven in Scripture means completion or finishing or wholeness. We are to forgive **over** and **over** and **over** and **over** and **over** and **over** and **over** again in God's Kingdom because it makes us whole while we help others to become whole.

QUESTION: When have you forgiven someone seventy times seven? When has someone forgiven you seventy times seven?

Jesus gives us the required steps of forgiveness: **1) Take pity.** Be compassionate. First, identify with them as we begin to see how much we have in common with the one who sinned against us. We are not that different from them; **2) Cancel the debt.** The unmerciful servant was thrown into prison and tortured. Instead, God wants us to forgive others who owe us because when we don't this is what metaphorically happens to us – we are spiritually and emotionally tormented by unforgiveness; **3) Let them go.** Set them free from debt, and in doing so, we set ourselves free.

QUESTION: Who do you need to forgive today? When have you canceled a debt?

Letting them go does not mean forgetting, excusing, ignoring, or even reconciling. It certainly doesn't mean going back to abusive or unhealthy relationships. It does mean that **forgiven people forgive people.**

QUESTION: With whom are you still trying to reconcile?

QUESTION: What unhealthy relationship have you ended?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to be merciful as You have been so gracious and merciful to us. Our sins were overwhelming for us and terrible in Your sight, but You forgave us of them totally and completely because You love us totally and completely. Our gratitude is demonstrated as we forgive others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.