

Bob Kauflin

SESSION 3 | What Forgiveness Isn't

I. INTRODUCTION

"The human need for forgiveness appears to be indelible. It won't go away by denouncing it or trying to deconstruct it. The need I'm referring to is both a profound need to grant forgiveness and to receive forgiveness." (Tim Keller, *Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?* p. xviii)

Forgiveness is "a commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated." (Chris Braun)

Forgiveness can be seen from two perspectives.

1. Attitude and action
2. Internal and external
3. Vertical and horizontal

II. WHAT FORGIVENESS ISN'T

A. A feeling

"For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:3–5)

Even if the feeling of forgiveness happens over time, the desire to extend forgiveness and be reconciled with the one who offended you is made possible through the mercy we've received in Christ. (Colossians 3 progression)

B. Ignoring the person or situation

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15–17)

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23–24)

“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” (Proverbs 18:15)

C. Unconditional

“And if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” (Luke 17:4)

“And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments.” (Luke 23:34)

D. Keeping score

E. A way of establishing moral superiority

“But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:19–20)

F. Something that only concerns me

“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:13–14)

“Christian forgiveness is never simply individualistic—concerned only with inner healing of the heart. It is at least that, but it is much more. God’s

concern is for the outer and social healing of the community as well.” (Keller, p. 107)

G. Accepting an apology

H. Required every time someone sins against me

“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.” (Proverbs 10:12)

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8)

I. Abandoning justice

“for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.” (Romans 13:4)

“Though God be infinitely and incomprehensibly gracious, though he purpose to exert his grace and goodness towards sinners, yet he will so do it, do it in such a way, as shall not be prejudicial to his own holiness and righteousness.” (John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 6, p. 403)

“Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.” (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

J. Removing consequences

“Then Nathan went to his house. And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died.” (2 Samuel 12:15–18a)

“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11)

K. Immediate restored trust

“But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” (Mark 16:7)

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” (John 21:15–17)

III. Conclusion



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