

The Power of Forgiveness

- Opening Announcements
- Opening Prayer

Q: What IS forgiveness?

Q: Is there a difference between "forgiveness" and "reconciliation"? What might that be?

READ: Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Q: According to this verse, what two things does scripture command?

Q: What is our motive/strength/basis for doing this?

Q: What do you think might happen to relationships that practice this verse? Why?

READ: Colossians 3:12-17 "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ 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.** ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Q: In this amazing section of scripture, describe the kind of people we as followers of Jesus should be? What are some of the characteristics?

Q: According to this verse, is forgiveness, "optional"? What happens if we treat it this way?

READ: Matthew 6:12 "...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Q: According to this verse, how does Jesus characterize sins that need to be "forgiven"? Discuss....

READ: Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Q: Why does Jesus condition "OUR" forgiveness on our willingness to forgive others?

Q: What's the connection with this and the "Imagio Dei"?

Q: When God's people are forgiving, WHAT is our testimony?

RECONCILIATION

Q: What IS "reconciliation"?

Q: Is reconciliation easy or difficult? Why?

READ: Colossians 1:19-22 "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him"

Q: What is the relationship between Jesus' death and reconciliation with God?

Q: What is the effects of being "reconciled"?

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Q: What is the effect of Christ's sacrifice for us? What does this have to do with "reconciliation"?

Q: What is an "ambassador"? According to verse 20, what's our role?