

**Don't Carry Any Extra Baggage**

Pastor Gregg Brenes

Do not say, "I'll do to them as they have done to me; I'll pay them back for what they did. Proverbs 24:29

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9 NLT

**Jesus to us: "Never stop forgiving."**

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?"<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Matthew 18:21-22

**The mercy of God is meant to make you merciful.**

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.'<sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'<sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.<sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." Matthew 18:32-35

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." Matthew 5:7 ESV

**Understanding forgiveness...**

- Forgiveness is not the same as trust.
- Forgiveness is not weakness.
- Forgiveness is entrusting justice to God.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written: "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. Romans 12:19 NASB

- Forgiveness is like an onion.

**Let's Connect**

- What was something you did as a child for which you asked forgiveness? What did you learn from your experience?

**Let's Talk About It**

Forgiveness for followers of Christ is not an option. Jesus tells His followers to forgive others as God has forgiven them. Forgiveness isn't easy, but recognizing the great debt you had with God and the relatively smaller debts that others have toward you should motivate and inspire you to forgive quickly and readily. Jesus even challenges us by saying, "If you don't forgive, you will not be forgiven." Forgiveness isn't a sign of weakness; it's the path to experiencing freedom.

Proverbs 24:29 & 17:9; Matthew 18:21-35; Matthew 5:7; Romans 12:19; 1 Peter 2:23

- Which part of the message impacted or challenged you?
- Read Proverbs 24:29 and 17:9. How have you seen the truth of these proverbs play out in your life and relationships?
- Read Matthew 18:21-25. When you hear these words from Jesus, what are your first impressions? How seriously does Jesus describe our forgiveness of others? Why do you think forgiveness is so important to Jesus?
- Read Romans 12:19. Forgiveness is letting go of personal vengeance. When should you hand someone over to God, and when would you also let others know? (Pastors, parents, friend, police, etc.)
- Discuss the thoughts of understanding forgiveness that Pastor Gregg mentioned in his message. When it comes to your need to forgive others, the question is never "if" but "who"? Without naming names, share what God stirred in your heart this Sunday regarding who you need to forgive.

**Take a Step**

- Who is God asking you to forgive? What step do you need to take?

**Here's My Prayer**

Father, I need Your help and guidance to live free of unforgiveness and bitterness. I don't want bitterness to take over my life. Please show me if there is any place in my heart where an offense has taken root. I choose to forgive because You so graciously forgave me. Heal me where I'm still hurting so my life will look more like Yours. In Jesus' name, amen.