

Forgiving Each Other

If we love God, we must also love our brother and sister. Last week we saw that love demands that we serve each other. This week we observe that love demands total forgiveness of one another.

Read Matthew 18:21-35

The context of this passage is seen in the previous verses. Jesus teaches His disciples that being brothers and sisters in the Kingdom means that we must lovingly confront each other in order to be reconciled. Peter, it seems, realizes that this means that forgiveness will be required—but how often? Jesus gives an amazing answer:

1. The rule of forgiveness is unconditional. (v.21, 22)

Peter thought he was being very gracious to suggest a seven-fold forgiveness. Jesus' answer is startling: not seven, but seventy times seven, which is to say "without limit!" Our forgiveness of others is to be without limit in frequency or in gravity. In Mark 11:25, Jesus said: "And whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." No matter how deeply or how often we've been hurt, we must forgive.

2. The rationale for forgiveness is unassailable. (vv.23–34)

Look at the parable Jesus told. The second servant owed the first servant 100 denarii - probably \$10,000 in today's economy. That's a big debt to cancel. But why must it be canceled? Because the first servant was forgiven a massive debt by the master, 10,000 talents—probably about \$6 billion! The logic of mercy is that those who have received it must give it away. How do we do this? Consider four steps:

- A. **Honestly assess the debt.** Unless you accurately calculate the damage, you don't know how much to forgive. And don't forget to consider how you have also sinned against your debtor.
- B. **Seek agreement.** This is what Matthew 18:15-18 is all about. The best transaction occurs when both parties agree about the nature of the offense. It is true that we should overlook most offenses against us; but most people confront what they should overlook and overlook what they should confront. The standard for confrontation should usually be the spiritual health of the offender and of the Body of Christ and the name of Christ in the community.
- C. **Cancel the debt.** Don't just think about it or pray about it or wait until you feel like it. Do it.
- D. **Burn the note.** When we forgive we drop all future claims against the old debt.

3. The results of unforgiveness are unthinkable. (v.35)

To refuse to forgive is to face the judgment of God without the forgiveness offered in Christ—unthinkable! Look at Matthew 6:14, 15:

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it. But there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive."

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why is it so difficult to forgive others?
- 2) What are the keys to success in forgiving others?
- 3) What are the benefits of forgiveness for you? For the debtor? For the church? For others?
- 4) How is Christian forgiveness distinctive from all other types of forgiveness?
- 5) Share an experience when you observed forgiveness being offered and it had an impact on you.

Digging Deeper

Make a list of people you have not fully forgiven. List what each has done to you. List what you have done against them.

Develop an action plan to be reconciled on all of these issues with all of these people.

Memory Verses

FOR THIS WEEK

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

Read this Week

[Forgive Us Our Debts as We Forgive Our Debtors](#)

by John Piper

Other Resources

BOOK

[Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom](#)

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

SERMON AUDIO

[Forgiveness and Restoration](#)

by Tim Keller