



WEEK TEN: THE FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS

Christians experience forgiveness to the extent that they extend forgiveness to others.

TEXT: MATTHEW 18:35

1. FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS IS A PREREQUISITE FOR AND AN EVIDENCE OF THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD

- Read Matthew 18:21-35 & Matthew 6:14-15

Peter wanted to know what it would look like in reality, for him to live as the forgiving person Jesus was calling him to be. He assumed that Jesus expected him to be generous with forgiveness, but Jesus blew his expectations apart, by saying that forgiveness has no limits.

In order to explain how this was even vaguely possible, Jesus told the parable about the servant who was in debt to his king. The king first extended lavish forgiveness and mercy on the servant, but when the servant failed to do the same for a smaller debt owing to him, the king revoked his offer of forgiveness altogether.

The parable explains our *need* for God's forgiveness, our *acceptance* of God's forgiveness, and the absurdity of not forgiving others when we have been forgiven so much. If we are unable to forgive someone who has wronged us, then we have not yet fully understood and embraced God's forgiveness for our own sin. Our un-forgiveness reveals that the gospel has not yet fully taken root in our own hearts. If we are struggling in the area of forgiveness we need to consider the following:

- Our own desperate need for forgiveness
- Our SIN of un-forgiveness
- ❖ Q: Why is forgiveness so difficult for us?
- ❖ Q: Why did Jesus essentially say that there are no limits when it comes to forgiving others?
- ❖ Q: Why is our inability to forgive others a sign that we have not grasped the magnitude of God's forgiveness towards us?
- ❖ Q: What should we do/how should we respond, if we realize we have not really grasped the necessity and profundity of our own forgiveness from God?

2. FORGIVENESS IS NOT:

- Denial of sin – sin is to be acknowledged for what it is, and then forgiven for what it is. Real forgiveness and reconciliation cannot happen without the sin, that caused the offense, being acknowledged or named.
 - Permission for more sin
 - The removal of consequence - discipline for sin is still often necessary, even when the sin has been forgiven.
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10 THINGS JESUS I WISH NEVER SAID

3. FORGIVENESS IS COSTLY SACRIFICE

Forgiveness is a decision we make, having thought through and counted the cost to ourselves. The one who grants forgiveness chooses to absorb the loss and the debt, and in so doing, we relinquish the right to revenge.

- ❖ Q: Though forgiveness does not deny the reality of sin, what does it deny?
- ❖ Q: Why is forgiveness so costly to the one doing the forgiving?
- ❖ Q: What is the difference between genuinely forgiving someone, and just “letting it go”?

4. FORGIVENESS IS A PATH TO FREEDOM

Even unbelievers would agree that un-forgiveness causes one to harbour bitterness, which eats away at one’s own peace. But from a Christian perspective, forgiveness is so much more than that. It is essentially an issue of obedience to Christ. When we forgive someone, we experience the joy of obedience, and the peace that follows. In doing so, it also stops the sin of the other person continuing to have power and influence in our lives.

- ❖ Q: Why is it true to say that for Christians, forgiveness is a pathway to real freedom?

5. FORGIVENESS IS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD

The world suffers with guilt and shame. The best way for them to learn about God’s forgiveness, would be to see believers forgiving one another, and forgiving those around them. As believers who really get the gospel, we should be the most forgiving people on the planet.

6. FORGIVENESS IS AN ACT OF RADICAL FAITH

- Read Luke 17:3-5

Forgiveness feels impossible. But in the moment we have a choice to make. We either ignore Jesus’ command to forgive, or we submit to his teaching, and seek the Lord for his power to overcome the emotional struggles associated with it. It will be a conscious fight for faith every time we are presented with the opportunity to forgive or not.

- ❖ Q: Why is genuine forgiveness a powerful witness to unbelievers?
- ❖ *Personal Reflection Q:* Have you ever been impacted by someone else’s choice to forgive the person who hurt them deeply? What did it teach you?
- ❖ Q: Why is forgiveness an act of radical faith, rather than a feeling we need to arrive at?

Take Home Reflection and Action Q: Who do you need to forgive? [Name/label their sin for what it is. Confess to yourself the real reason for why you have not forgiven them already – this will identify your emotions around the issue. Calculate the cost for the sin/debt you are going to incur by forgiving them. Choose to forgive – let your faith, and not your feelings, determine the decision. Trust God to heal the difficult emotions associated with the sin. Thank God for his power that has helped you to make the decision and follow it through.]