

Forgiving Others

Matthew 18:21-22 HCSB Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how many times could my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (22) "I tell you, not as many as seven," Jesus said to him, "but 70 times seven.

I. The forgiven are forgiving.

- **Matthew 18:32-33 HCSB** "Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. (33) Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'
- **Ephesians 4:31-32 HCSB** All bitterness, anger and wrath, insult and slander must be removed from you, along with all wickedness. (32) And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.
- **Colossians 3:13 HCSB** accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must *forgive*.

Note: Real forgiveness follows God's pattern. Because God has forgiven all our sins, we should not withhold forgiveness from others. Realizing how completely Christ has forgiven us should produce a free and generous attitude of forgiveness toward others. When we don't forgive others, we are setting ourselves outside and above Christ's law of love.

II. Forgiving others allows forgiveness of self.

- **Matthew 6:14-15 HCSB** "For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. (15) But if you don't forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing.
- **Matthew 7:2 HCSB** For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
- **Matthew 18:31-35 HCSB** When the other slaves saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. (32) "Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. (33) Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' (34) And his master got angry and handed him over to the jailers until he could pay everything that was owed. (35) So My heavenly Father will also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart."
- **Mark 11:25 HCSB** And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.
- **James 2:13 HCSB** For judgment is without mercy to the one who hasn't shown mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Note: If we expect to be forgiven, we need to practice forgiveness. Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: if we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us. Why? Because when we don't forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. God's forgiveness of sin is not the direct result of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means (Ephesians 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. ³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.). It is easy to ask God for forgiveness, but difficult to grant it to others. Whenever we ask God to forgive us for sin, we should ask ourselves, 'Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?'

III. Forgiveness is the ultimate strategy. We forgive because we don't want evil to get the best of us.

- [Romans 12:19-21 HCSB](#) Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: **Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay**, says the Lord. (20) **But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.** (21) Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.
 - [Proverbs 24:28-29 HCSB](#) Don't testify against your neighbor without cause. Don't deceive with your lips. (29) Don't say, "I'll do to him what he did to me; I'll repay the man for what he has done."
- A. **Forgiveness is a mark of the Christian life.** If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to others. And remember, grace is *undeserved* favor. By giving an enemy a drink, we're not excusing his misdeeds. We're recognizing him, forgiving him, and loving him in spite of his sins – just as Christ did for us.
- B. **Forgiveness is contrary to the pattern of the world.** In this day of constant lawsuits and incessant demands for legal right, Paul's command sounds almost impossible. When someone hurts you deeply, instead of giving him what he deserves, Paul says to extend friendship to him. Why does Paul tell us to forgive our enemies?
- (1) Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation.
 - (2) The purpose of this nonviolent resistance is to make the enemy feel ashamed and change his or her ways.
 - (3) By contrast, returning evil for evil hurts you just as much as it hurts your enemy. Even if your enemy never repents, forgiving him or her will free you of a heavy load of bitterness.
- C. **Forgiveness is an act of the will.** Forgiveness involves both attitudes and actions. If you find it difficult to feel forgiving of those who have hurt you, try responding with kind actions. If appropriate, tell such people that you would like to heal your relationships. Give them a helping hand. Send them a gift. Smile at them. Many times you will discover that right actions will eventually lead to right feelings.

IV. Real forgiveness does not keep track.

- [Matthew 18:21-22 HCSB](#) Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how many times could my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (22) **"I tell you, not as many as seven,"** Jesus said to him, **"but 70 times seven."**

Note: The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offend them – but only three times. Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the "perfect" number) was enough times to forgive someone. But Jesus answered, "seventy times seven," meaning that we shouldn't even keep track of how many times we forgive someone. We should always forgive those who are truly repentant, no matter how many times they ask.

V. Forgiveness is not foolish.

- A. **Joseph is a model of forgiveness.** He was rejected, kidnapped, enslaved, and imprisoned. Although his brothers had been unfaithful to him, he graciously forgave them and shared his prosperity. Joseph demonstrated how God forgives us and showers us with goodness even though we have sinned against Him. The same forgiveness and blessings are ours if we ask for them.
- [Genesis 45:5 HCSB](#) And now don't be worried or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.

- **Romans 5:6-8 HCSB** For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For rarely will someone die for a just person--though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. (8) But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!
- B. **Joseph tested his brothers motivations.** He did this to determine that they truly were repentant before revealing himself and extending forgiveness.
- **Genesis 42:6-7 HCSB** Joseph was in charge of the country; he sold grain to all its people. His brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the ground. (7) When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan to buy food," they replied.
 - **Exodus 20:20 HCSB** Moses responded to the people, "Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear Him and will not sin."
 - **Romans 12:9 HCSB** Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good.
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 HCSB** (21) but test all things. Hold on to what is good. (22) Stay away from every form of evil.
 - **1 John 4:1 HCSB** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
- C. **Reconciliation was hinged upon repentance.** Joseph's brothers acknowledged their sin and were truly repentant.
- **Genesis 44:30-34 HCSB** "So, if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us--his life is wrapped up with the boy's life-- (31) when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die. Then your servants will have brought the gray hairs of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. (32) Your servant became accountable to my father for the boy, saying, 'If I do not return him to you, I will always bear the guilt for sinning against you, my father.' (33) Now please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave, in place of the boy. Let him go back with his brothers. (34) For how can I go back to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the grief that would overwhelm my father."
 - **Genesis 45:3 HCSB** Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were too terrified to answer him.
 - **1 Corinthians 5:5 HCSB** turn that one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.
 - **2 Corinthians 2:6-7 HCSB** (6) The punishment by the majority is sufficient for such a person, (7) so now you should forgive and comfort him instead; otherwise, this one may be overwhelmed by excessive grief.
- D. **Forgiveness does not mean milk-toast.** Though Joseph felt great compassion for his brothers and had already determined to forgive them, he still continued the test.
- **Genesis 42:7 HCSB** When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan to buy food," they replied.
 - **Genesis 42:24 HCSB** He turned away from them and wept. Then he turned back and spoke to them. He took Simeon from them and had him bound before their eyes.

VI. Discipline is still involved in the restoration of the sinner. This practice is reflected in the New Testament as well.

- **Matthew 18:15-17 HCSB** "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) But if he won't listen, take one or two more with you, so that **by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established.** (17) If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you.
- **1 Corinthians 5:5 HCSB** turn that one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.
- **2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 HCSB (14)** And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don't associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. (15) Yet don't treat him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Note: Here we are told that we are not to treat Christians as enemies. Our enemies are to be fed and given to drink. Christians who continue to do what is wrong are held to a higher standard than our enemies are! You can check out this concept in

- **1 Corinthians 5:9-13 HCSB (9)** I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- (10) by no means referring to this world's immoral people, or to the greedy and swindlers, or to idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. (11) But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a reviler, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. (12) For what is it to me to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those who are inside? (13) But God judges outsiders. **Put away the evil person from among yourselves.**

VII. True repentance must precede forgiveness and reconciliation.

- **Psalms 34:18 HCSB** The LORD is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit.
- **Jeremiah 26:3 HCSB** Perhaps they will listen and return--each from his evil way of life--so that I might relent concerning the disaster that I plan to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.
- **Luke 17:3-4 HCSB** **Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.** (4) **And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.**"
- **Acts 3:19 HCSB** Therefore repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
- **Acts 8:22-23 HCSB** Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. (23) For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."