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## Forgiveness Part II

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### God desires that we seek forgiveness?

#### Psalm 32; Matthew 18:21-35

God desires that we seek forgiveness, because God is a God of relationships, and is committed to relationships. God knows our human weaknesses and our self-destructive nature, and that our relationships tend to be fragile. Broken relationships come out of our sinful nature and our fallen world, which seeks its own gain. God's desire is to show the world our potential. Because of what Christ has done for us, we should not take pleasure in destructive situations, those that divide and draw relationships apart. Relationships are what life is all about! Satan seeks to destroy relationships. His first attempt was in the Garden of Eden, nearly defeating our relationship with God and with one another. God's plan is to prove Satan wrong, and, our call is to build one another up, not destroy one another.

When we have been wronged, we experience feelings of betrayal, and consider retaliation to be justified. God calls us out of retaliation and into reconciliation. When we fail to forgive, we are the ones who suffer the most. Anger, resentment, shame, bitterness, contempt, and defensiveness all synergistically build on top of one another, so every segment within us is held hostage with these emotions. We are chained like a dog on a leash, unable to reach the destination we desire, what Christ has for us. Do not allow the bitterness to continue so that it festers, corrupting your whole being. The bitterness must not take hold in your life, or it will block the flow of the Holy Spirit and self-controlling love. Or else, the festering will continue to the point that Christ is crying out to us in the wilderness, yet we do not hear Him.

Our Lord is alerting us to the perils of being unforgiving, just as the call of *red alert* in the TV show, "Star Trek," warns its crew of impending danger. If we do not heed the warning, our emotions will run wild, and we will no longer have control or composure, unable to recognize who we are in Christ. Thus, the anger and the uncontrolled emotions will become controlled by Satan. The *red alert* has been ignored, and our ship has been destroyed! Your relationship(s) have been destroyed!

This passage in Matthew, chapter eighteen, is a story of a forgiving king and a wicked servant. The king forgave this servant's enormous debt, which is a parallel to our enormous debt of sin that we held until Christ forgave us. This servant represents the Believer, who, after experiencing the forgiveness of God, did harbor bitterness to another, and then refused to forgive his fellow Christian (or a non-Christian) for a much, much smaller debt. The king became furious, and handed the servant over to be tortured. The Bible is telling us that if we refuse to forgive one another, and continue to harbor bitterness, we can be tortured, too. My personal experience is when I have refused to forgive people in the past, I have become consumed with feelings of guilt and shame, and this is a torture I can do without. I feel much better, and sleep much better with an attitude of forgiveness; I cannot think well or sleep well with an attitude of bitterness. Why would a Christian want to go through life with feelings of bitterness,

which consume him with misery and unrest, instead of giving it to the Lord, and receiving forgiveness and rest?

How can we go through our Christian life and experience, and rationalize our actions and deeds, only to face our Lord later at the judgment? By what point are we to make, by what feeling are we to base, by what hope do we have? When we have the knowledge of God's mercy, then we have the responsibility of acting with mercy toward one another (2 Corinthians 5:21).

God calls Christians to operate in the parameters of forgiveness, love, and mercy. And, when we have not been forgiving, we will have a heart filled with suffering and torment. How can we receive Christ's forgiveness, and claim Christ as our Savior, when we are unable to forgive one another? When we have a forgiving attitude, then we will have a heart at rest and in peace!

### **Questions**

1. Why does God desire that we seek forgiveness?
2. How do broken relationships come about for you?
3. Why does God call us out of retaliation and into reconciliation?
4. Why do you suppose that relationships are what life is all about? How does forgiveness play a part in this?
5. When you fail to forgive, who suffers the most?
6. How have you seen anger, resentment, shame, bitterness, contempt, or defensiveness build in you because of being hurt?
7. Have you ever felt held hostage with these emotions? How can forgiveness help?
8. Have you ever been wronged or experienced feelings of betrayal? Have you desired or considered retaliation? Would you have been justified? How does these feeling line up to these passages?
9. Because God is a God of relationships, how can you be better committed to building better relationships?
10. How do you feel that God knows your weaknesses and self-destructive nature, and that relationships tend to be fragile?