
Forgiveness Part III

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What Forgiveness Looks Like

Psalm 32; Matthew 18:21-35

Taking our primary lead from Matthew, chapter 18, and looking at various other Scriptures, we can see what God requires of us, and our appropriate response regarding the different categories of forgiveness.

We, as Christians, must extend ourselves to other people with love, and that which flows out of love—forgiveness!

Ephesians 4:29-32 tells us,

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

John 13:34-35 tells us,

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

We are to love one another—period! No strings attached! This is the model we are to use to show God's love to the world!

We should be clear on this. A healthy Christian is one who puts aside the malicious traits of an evil sin nature, and embraces others in love. What comes out of love is the release of our feelings of betrayal and hurt. The Christian is called to model kindness, love, empathy, compassion—and, out of these, will flow forgiveness. God wants us to get with it, to wake up, and seize the wonders and opportunities He gives us. An unforgiving attitude, and its ugly rotten fruits, will chock us off from His wonders!

Ask yourself this question. *How do I handle forgiveness?* How do you respond when others forgive you? What do you do with opportunities that our Lord has for you? We must realize the generosity of Grace, and being in Christ, which we do not deserve. Our Lord does not want us to forgive begrudgingly, because, He did not forgive us with conditions, or with strings attached. A Christian that does not forgive is like a small child who refuses to share a game ball that he/she received as a gift. Thus, the child will not be able to play with that ball as it was designed to be used. That child will not be using it to its full potential. When the Christian does not forgive, he/she distorts the relationships he enjoys. We are like the child who, unable to play a game because he refuses to share the ball, cries that he is alone and nobody will play with him, or, he cries because

he is not having any fun. Without forgiveness, we forfeit relationships with others, and, we are unable to play our games. We just end up cheating ourselves out of our potential, and the best plan that Christ has for us.

When God opens a door for you, the only one who can shut it is you! Do not allow your trepidations and past experiences rule how you will proceed in your life and call. We are not responsible for how others treat us. We are only responsible for being our best for His glory, to produce Fruit, and to be contagious for the faith. We cannot do that if we wallow in self-pity. Yes, we need times to rest and lick our wounds, but we are not to make a prison out of it, cutting ourselves off from His call and His best!

When we feel weak, we still have His strength, and our faith and resolve to continue to grow our faith will become a mighty pillar that others can look to for encouragement and as an example. We are His example to others; even at our lowest, we can excel for His highest. Let us understand what He has done for us so we can do our best to be faithful even in times of pressures, waiting, and uncertainty.

Questions

Read Psalm 32; Matthew 18:21-35, and ask these *Inductive Questions* to each passage:

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me about forgiveness?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened to pursue forgiveness?
5. Is there sin such as unforgiveness in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me?
8. What is in the way of my listening to God?
9. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
10. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?
11. Read Ephesians 4:29-32, how can you extend yourself to other people with love, and that which flows out of love is forgiveness?
12. How has God desired that you seek forgiveness? What did you do? What did you not do? What can you do now?