

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

Notes: According to Webster the act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. Last time we learned about the forgiveness we received from God. Today we are going to look at the importance of forgiving folks who have harmed us. The Bible teaches us a proper understanding of forgiveness is essential if we hope to live a life reconciled to God. God wants us to forgive others as he has forgiven us. It needs to be a fact because there are times we won't feel like forgiving others.

I. Our responsibility to God is to forgive those who have harmed us in any way. Colossians 3:12-14 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Notice the command put on; this means desire to be merciful and kind.

Humbleness of mind and meekness means don't take yourself too seriously; the world does not revolve around you. Longsuffering and forbearing means give God a chance to change the person who has hurt you allowing them to not be perfect. Don't give yourself the authority to judge a person's heart. Forgive one another as Christ forgave you allowing the love of Christ to flow through you. The key to forgiving is to allow the Holy Spirit to direct you. Several of those characteristics are the fruit of the Spirit. We are talking about a Spirit driven life which has a forgiving spirit. In other words we don't want to be at odds with our brother.

1. God expects us to use the same compassion toward our brothers that He used with us. (28-35) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. In our scriptures for today the rich man forgave his servant a massive debt. That same servant was owed a much smaller debt by his brother and he refused to forgive him. The rich man then holds his servant accountable for his debt. This is not suggesting we lose our salvation but it does teach us we can lose our fellowship with God.

2. Remember how much God has forgiven you and what it cost him. Psalm 51:3-4 For I acknowledge my transgressions: And my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, And done this evil in thy sight: That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, And be clear when thou judgest. Every sin we commit is a sin against God. In order to pay that sin debt Jesus went to the cross. When we consider that God has forgiven us for every sin we ever committed the wrong committed against us seems trivial.

3. Admit you were seriously hurt. John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Sometimes it is hard to forgive someone because we can't admit to ourselves we have been hurt; we don't want them to think they have any power over us. The freedom referred to in this verse is the freedom to abide in Christ. Jesus had just told folks ; if you keep my commandments you will be my disciples and then you shall know the truth which will keep you free.

A. Realize forgiveness releases us from the bondage caused by the feelings of anger and hurt.

Ephesians 4:26-27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil. If I hold on to wrath I am giving place in my heart to the devil. There are times when people hurt us deeply; infidelity, murder a loved one, betray our trust, or take advantage of our love using us for their own selfish desires. Many times people verbally attack us causing us to be consumed with the feeling of angry and creating within us a desire for revenge. The truth is anger gives a place to the Devil and seriously disrupts our relationship with God.

4. Deliberately choose to forgive and give up your right to get even. Romans 12:17-21 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

A. Strive to be a peacemaker. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Personal revenge leads to a never ending war. Jesus tells us in the beatitudes blessed are the peacemakers. To make peace with someone who has harmed you is a Christ like action. God has provided some characteristics necessary to accomplish this in the fruits of the spirit; longsuffering, forbearing, kindness. There will be time when you will have to sacrifice your way to get along.

B. Do not seek or be consumed with revenge. (19-20) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. God says to us let me take care of retribution and do not consume your mind with thoughts of getting even. Let's face it our initial response is to plot how we are going to get even.

C. Respond to evil with good. (21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. The best way to get rid of an enemy is to make him your friend. **Dr. Kime writes:** We are not overcome by evil when evil people mistreat us. We are overcome by evil when we respond to evil with evil. However, when we respond to evil with goodness, evil is conquered.

5. Ask God to allow you to see the heart of the person who has harmed you. Some people mean well but the delivery of what they say hurts or makes us angry.

6. Desire that good things would happen to your wrongdoer. Matthew 5:43-45 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. One of the best ways to get over resentment is to pray the person who harms you gets saved and becomes so filled with the Holy Spirit that the Spirit can produce the fruit of the Spirit in them. God knows this is impossible for us to do without his help. Jesus says the ability to forgive is a characteristic of children of the Father. As children we need to use all the resources available to us.