**The Joy of Forgiveness!**

It is inevitable that we will sin against one another at times and hurt each other. Therefore, it is important that we know how to forgive. Some couples bring into their marriage all sorts of baggage learned from ungodly parents or previous relationships that cause conflict.

This can go on for years slowly driving a wedge between them. Hurt feelings lead to bitterness, anger, resentment, isolation, and oftentimes divorce. The impact on children is tragic. It doesn’t have to be this way, though. There is a solution, and the solution is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is vital to having a God-honouring family. Those who do not forgive grow bitter, cynical, and isolated from one another. Eventually, relationships grow distant. The offenses of the past build up like a huge wall that separates people from one another. The only way to knock down this sinful wall is with the battering ram of forgiveness!

**Definition**: *Forgiveness* – is not a **feeling**, but an **act of the will** to do 3 things:

#1 Give up resentment against, and the desire to punish, another

#2 Stop being angry with another, and

#3 Grant pardon! Literally, to forgive means to release and to send away another’s wrong against us.

**I.** **Important Introductory Ideas on Forgiveness**

1. Why Forgive?
2. Our greatest need is **forgiveness**! Without God’s forgiveness we would be destined for eternal punishment.

 Romans 6:23

 Revelations 20:11-15

1. We are **commanded** to forgive others in the same way God has forgiven us.

 Ephesians 4:32

1. Seeking and **receiving** forgiveness is a clear demonstration of love for one another in the body; perhaps the strongest argument for the Christian faith.

 John 13:35

 *Un-reconciled relationships between Christians hinder evangelism and rob individuals and churches of a God-honouring witness.*

1. If God has forgiven us, then we ought to forgive one another! Col. 3:13
2. What Forgiveness **is Not**!
3. Forgiveness is **not a feeling**! (Luke 17:3-10)

1. Forgiveness is to be **granted** when a sinner repents (vs. 3)
2. Forgiveness is to be granted **repeatedly** on the same day if a sinner repeatedly professes repentance (vs. 4) – something you may not feel like doing
3. Jesus declared that the disciples had the faith necessary to forgive and they did not need to wait until they felt **stronger** spiritually (vss.5-6)
4. Forgiveness is a matter of **obedience**, not feelings. (vss. 7-10)

1. Forgiveness is **not forgetting**!
2. There is no command in the Bible telling us to **forget** before we forgive.
3. Neither is there scriptural support for the statement, “If you haven’t forgotten, you haven’t forgiven.” Forgetting is a frequent **result** of granting forgiveness biblically, but not always.
4. References to God “forgetting” sins (e.g. Is. 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34) are really statements of God promising not to “remember” our sins **against us**. God can’t forget, but He can choose to not hold our sins against us.

1. Forgiveness is **not excusing sin!**
2. Excusing sin is a form of minimizing sin, and not taking it seriously. Minimizing sin destroys hope because it does not lead to a clear conscience.

b. Excusing sin is a dishonest way of dealing with sin; it is calling it something other than what God calls it. (more than apologizing!)

1. **Forgiveness doesn’t mean there will be no consequences of sin**!
2. Forgiveness is **not an option** – it is a **command**!

 Colossians 3:12-13

1. What Forgiveness **IS**!
2. Forgiveness is a decision – a promise to:
3. Not **dwell** on the incident
4. Not **bring up** the incident to use against another in hurtful way
5. Not **talk** to others about the incident
6. Not allow the incident to **stand between** you and the other person or hinder your relationship with them
7. Forgiveness is an act of the **will**, not the emotions.
8. The **Basis** of Forgiveness.
9. According to the following verses what is the basis for forgiveness?

Hebrews 9:22

 Matthew 26:28

 Ephesians 1:7

1. Forgiveness is possible because God is **Gracious**! (Psalm 103)

 *(God is more willing to forgive us than we are willing to seek His forgiveness!)*

1. The LORD is compassionate and gracious (vs.8)
2. He does not keep His anger forever (vs.9)
3. He does not deal with us according to our sins (vs.10)
4. His lovingkindness is great (vs. 11)
5. He removes our sin and carries it away (vs.12; Isa. 53:4-6)
6. He has compassion on those who fear Him (vs. 13)
7. He sees us in our weakness and need and He acts on our behalf (vs.14)

*The LORD did not ignore or overlook sin. He dealt with it. He sent His Son to die on the cross, (the just for the unjust) in order to bear sin’s penalty and carry it away.*

*1 Peter 3:18, “****For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God****.”*

*Jesus Christ laid down His life so that we may live! Now, we ought to lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16).*

How should these truths impact the way you think about and respond to those who have offended you?

**Talk about it!**

**II.** **The Practice of Forgiveness**

1. What is necessary for forgiveness?
2. **Our sin** must be forgiven!

Acts 2:38

1 John 1:9

1. We must be **willing** to forgive others!

 Mark 11:25

1. How should we forgive one another?
2. In the **same way** God has forgiven us! (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13)
3. With a **Kind** and **Tender-hearted** attitude! (Eph. 4:32)
4. Our forgiveness should be **without limit**! (Matthew 18:21-22)
5. Don’t **wait** to forgive! (Mark 11:25)

**III.** **The Heart of Forgiveness**

A. We need to put on our Lord’s **heart of forgiveness**!

1. According to Luke 23:34 what did Jesus ask of the Father in heaven for the people that nailed Him on the cross and were putting Him to death? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What did Jesus say about what these people were doing? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *(They didn’t understand the full implication)*
3. Would you be able to forgive someone who was doing something horrible to you the way Jesus forgave? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Read the parable of the “unmerciful servant” in Matthew 18:21-35. According to Matthew 18:35 what will be the outcome for those who act like the unmerciful servant?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Notice that when we refuse to forgive, unforgiveness is bound to us and *our* sins are not forgiven. Who suffers when we refuse to forgive? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Application to our families:
2. Luke 7:36-50 is an account of a sinful woman who came to Jesus and showed how much she loved him by pouring out her expensive perfume on Him and kissing His feet. Jesus forgave her of her sins because she was repentant. According to Luke 7:47 what is the result of someone who has been forgiven for much? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Most people don’t know how much they have been forgiven for. Can you list some things for which you need forgiveness?
4. Should this cause you to love little or love much?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Make a list of people you have not forgiven and the things they have done to you. (focus on your family first)
6. When the list is complete, choose whether you will forgive these offenses against you or if you will hang on to them. What will happen to you if you hang on to this unforgiveness? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
7. What will happen if you choose to forgive? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*Ask yourself:*

Do I deserve the forgiveness of God?

Will I withhold forgiveness from another?

Notes:

Forgiveness is not the same thing as apologizing. Apologizing (just saying sorry / which is how so many people try to deal with offenses) is actually not a Biblical concept. The Bible doesn’t teach it. The Bible teaches that we are to forgive one another, not merely apologize for our sin.

What is the difference? Well, most of the time, apologizing is just a way to gain relief from our feelings. It is an attempt to gain relief from the pressure and guilt of sin by trying to convince others of how sorry you are for your words or actions. You want relief from the guilt of your sin. The problem though, is that it is self-focused and has the goal of getting off the hook, or getting things over with, rather than actually dealing with sin in a Christ-honouring manner.

Biblical forgiveness is very different. Forgiveness, doesn’t merely seek relief from feelings; it wants to deal with fault – it wants to deal with guilt and sin. Forgiveness seeks reconciliation with another and not just relief from guilt. It is easy to apologize – just say you are sorry for harming someone and then just walk away from the relationship.

But forgiveness doesn’t do this. It is about genuine change and reconciliation. Forgiveness wants the relationship restored – even strengthened – and so it is willing to engage in the hard work of dealing with the sinful thinking that lead to the sinful behaviour. Forgiveness is always God focused and others focused, and is committed to fully resolving issues God’s way. It is more concerned with God’s honour then with personal comfort.

Forgiveness implies that an actual sin has been committed (not hurt feelings /disappointments/etc)

Forgiveness is costly

The focus of forgiveness is on the sovereignty of God (not ourselves or our feelings) (Joseph)

Mark 11:25 … whenever you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone.