

Flourishing in the Workplace – 07 - Forgiving Others

The Lord's prayer comes to the place of forgiving those who have sinned against us, after reminding us that we are God's children and our Father is in heaven, of exploring the vast territories of God's promises, God's character, God's provision and God's grace.

Forgiving others is a theme that repeats itself throughout the new testament.

The journey of forgiveness starts with heavy pain and seems too long and a mountain too high. But God doesn't ask you to walk the journey of forgiveness alone. God gives you his grace, his strength – the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, as an ever-present help to climb the mountain to forgiveness.

Forgiveness depends solely on your willingness to do as the Lord did for you – to unilaterally and unconditionally cancel the debt. When you forgive you are handing to God your claim over the person who has wronged you.

When you forgive someone, you are taking them off your emotional hook and placing them on God's hook. You can trust that God will deal with that person justly and rightly in his time and in his way. When you forgive, you are handing the person over to the most powerful being in the universe – God Almighty, who offers all people full forgiveness if they will accept it.

Forgiving others covers the gamut of offenses from the big things to the little things. When you choose to forgive, don't leave a speck of spite or miniscule grudge behind. Give them all to Jesus. Grains of sand can accumulate into a heavy load – in the same way a pile of little offenses that remain unforgiven can become a heavy burden. Jesus invites you today to place every little speck of spite, resentment or jealousy into his loving hands. God's forgiveness covers every offense large and small, because his forgiveness has to do with his character.

Read

Matt 5:44 NKJV - love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you

Matt 6:9-15 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Luke 6:37-41 ³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

³⁹ He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

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⁴¹ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Col 3:12-14 - ¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Rom 12:17-21 ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”^[a] says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”^[a]

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Eph 4:29-32 ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Hebrews 12:14-15 ¹⁴ Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

1 John 2:9-11 ⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

Questions

- 1) Share a story of forgiving someone. What is the process you went through?
- 2) How would you describe the act of forgiving someone – Is it a heavy burden, or is it a privilege?
- 3) In the Lord’s prayer what are all the things that come before the statement ‘as we forgive those who have sinned against us’? Why is that context important to forgiving others?
- 4) Read Col 3:12-14. Picture yourself as the person described in verse 12, what image comes to your mind – who are you, are you alone, what are you feeling, what are you wearing?
 - a) How does that picture enable you to forgive (verse 13)?

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- b) How does putting on love (verse 14) change the picture of yourself – what are you doing, how are you going about your work?
- 5) When you forgive make sure you also set firm boundaries to protect yourself from further mistreatment. There is nothing godly or noble about giving irresponsible people another opportunity to take advantage of you. God wants you to steer clear of stone throwers. Being a doormat or being perpetually harmed by somebody's bad habits is not part of God's plan for your life. By overtly or silently implying it's okay when people wrong you, enables them, and gives them permission to continue to do wrong. When you are a people pleaser and don't say no when you should say no, you are actually saying no to Christ.
- How do you set boundaries (particularly at work where you may have to interact with people daily) so that the person you have forgiven does not continue to hurt you?
- 6) What are the rewards of forgiveness / the benefits of praying for our enemies?
- 7) Today the world hangs in balance waiting for you to choose between revenge and forgiveness; between resentment and grace. God alone knows the impact of your choice to forgive even the tiniest of wrongs. How might forgiving someone have a ripple effect beyond you and the person you are forgiving?

A sample prayer to pray to forgive someone

Lord Jesus, thank You for caring about how much my heart has been hurt. You know the pain I am feeling from (insert offense here). Right now I release all that pain into Your hands. Thank You, Lord, for dying on the cross for me and extending Your forgiveness to me. As an act of my will, I choose to forgive (insert person's name). Right now, I take (name) off my emotional hook, and I place this person on Your hook. I refuse all thoughts of revenge. I trust that in Your time and in Your way You will deal with my offender as You see fit. And Lord, thank You for giving me Your power to forgive so that I can be set free. In Your precious name I pray. Amen¹.

Application

1 Sam 12:23 - As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you

While Christ works individually in our hearts to bring us to the place where we can forgive, Christ places us in community so that we can support each other in the journey of forgiveness. What support do you need from this community to help you in the journey of forgiveness or to set boundaries to protect yourself from further harm?

¹ Hunt, June. How to Forgive...When You Don't Feel Like It (p. 202). Harvest House Publishers. Kindle Edition.