

07 – Forgiving Others

How is it possible to forgive others particularly when what they have said or done has inflicted pain in our lives, or in the lives of those we love? Jesus in the Lord's Prayer invites us to forgive those who have sinned against us. But we don't start there. We start by acknowledging we are God's children, and God is our Father, then we move on to reflect on God's holiness, God's story and God's provision which we have explored in previous sessions.

Only when we acknowledge that we are God's children, that God is our Father, God is holy, that God's kingdom is coming, that God's will is being accomplished, and that God is our provider are we able to come to the point where we can offer forgiveness to others.

You can show extraordinary love because you are extraordinarily loved. You can extraordinarily forgive, because you have been extraordinarily forgiven.

Christ strengthens you to forgive those who have hurt you. The offence is real and your pain is real. Jesus has experienced and fully understands that pain. Jesus knows your need and he is more than able to empower you to forgive even when you feel it's impossible. True forgiveness begins in the private, intimacy of your relationship with your Heavenly Father when you yield your wounded heart to him.

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.

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.

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.

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.

When you work through the process of forgiveness you break the chains that are holding a heavy bag of rocks and hurts that is dragging you down and depleting your strength. Having worked through the process of forgiveness, God will flood the space freed in your life with joy, peace, love, hope and laughter. Allow God to prune thoughts of hatred, jealousy, revenge, resentment or self-pity from your heart so that the fruit of the Spirit can blossom in your life.

07 – Forgiving Others

When you forgive others, God, the master sculptor, transforms these rocks into an unexpected masterpiece. God alone knows how to take each painful experience in your life and work them for his eternal purposes. Don't try to figure it out, or explain it, but in simple child-like faith, with joy, place the person who caused you pain into Jesus' nail pierced hands.

When you choose to release your grip over the pain the hurt and the person who has wronged you, God will fashion a forgiving spirit in your heart.

When you forgive you are declaring to a watching world and to the angels, that what has happened to you has not happened outside of your Father's care for you. *"Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your Father's knowing it. So don't be afraid. You are worth much more than many sparrows."* (Matt 10:29, 31 NCV)

It's tough to pray for our enemies. However, like you, they too are sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God. They are men and women who carry a heavy load of hurts themselves. Your prayer is that they will come to know salvation in Christ. Your prayer is that God will address whatever caused them to harm us – pride, arrogance, selfishness, deceit in his own time and his own way.

When you choose to pray for your enemies, any bitterness that remains in your heart is softened by the Holy Spirit and transformed into the sweetness of love. When you choose to pray for your enemies you are taking all power away from your enemy to control your life and allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross he prayed "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing". There wasn't one person there who showed remorse or said "I'm sorry." They weren't even aware of the unthinkable crime they were committing – killing the Son of God. Yet he forgave them ... and in the process forgave us.

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.

Today the world hangs in balance waiting for you to choose between revenge and forgiveness; between resentment and grace. Only God knows the impact of your choice to forgive. Your act of forgiveness, even for the tiniest of wrongs, radiates outward like ripples in a pond and can change the destructive course of families, churches, workplaces, communities and whole societies.

07 – Forgiving Others

I invite you today to embrace the daunting task of forgiveness, not because it feels right, but because you want to follow Jesus' example of grace in the midst of your pain. When you forgive others, you are multiplying the grace of God.

Don't wait, don't carry the heavy rocks people have inflicted on your life any longer – Jesus, who paid the price for your sins, offers you his power to forgive those who have hurt you, to pray this prayer:

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