

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”
Ephesians 4:32

I Forgive You

Forgive One Another – Ephesians 4:32

“Say you’re sorry, now!”

Did you ever hear that from your parents? With four boys in the house, we were often getting into fights. There was one girl, but we never tried to take her toys. We would get into some fierce fights and it didn’t help to be sent to our rooms because we shared a room. Mom would finally get us off each other and then came the apology. We would have to tell each other we were sorry. I want to say that every time I was genuine about it. I want to say that, but I can’t

Forgiveness is a lost discipline. I say discipline because it takes work sometimes to forgive people. How would you define the word forgiveness?

When my son wrongs someone, he is learning the need to ask for forgiveness. He will go to that person and say, “I apologize for . . . Will you forgive me?” Unfortunately, many will respond with, “It’s okay.” I cringe when I hear that response because it is not okay, and because it was not okay he needed to ask for forgiveness. I know their heart is to say, “I forgive you,” but for some reason we have a hard time saying that.

Why is it that some people cannot say, “I forgive you”?

Think about it. How often do you say, “I forgive you”? There are other responses that we give:

It’s okay. It’s alright. Don’t worry about it. Forget it.

These seem to be programmed responses when someone says they’re sorry. I am sure we have the best intentions in mind when we say these things, but why can’t we simply say, “I forgive you”?

In Matthew eighteen, we see Jesus helping Peter to understand this aspect of forgiveness. There is a sense that Peter is trying to look good by asking if it is good to forgive seven times, but Jesus replies with, “Seventy times seven.” Jesus then tells a parable. A rich ruler calls in the debt with one of his slaves. This slave could never hope to repay him and falls to his face with promises to repay. The ruler had compassion and forgave his debts. This same slave goes out and finds a friend that owes him a small amount. He demands payment and then throws him in jail. The ruler hears of this and calls the slave back in to explain why he could not forgive a small debt even though his large debt was forgiven. The slave ends up in jail. Jesus explains that this is how God will treat those who do not forgive.

Why is it so important for us to forgive?

“...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”
Colossians 3:13

Paul says in Ephesians 4:32 that we need to forgive one another “just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Just like the slave in the parable, we have been forgiven a debt that we could have never repaid. That same forgiveness that was given to us, we need to give to others. The meaning behind the word “forgive” is to give freely as a gift or to pardon. It carries with it that there are no strings attached. When we forgive, we are not to hold it over each other’s heads as if to say, “I forgave you, now you owe me.”

Have you ever thought you forgave someone, but then brought it back up? Why?

We may have told them, “It’s okay”, but in our hearts we were still holding a grudge. Maybe that is why we have such a hard time saying it. It comes down to our hearts. Let me explain.

Sometimes you may not say, “I forgive you” because you really don’t forgive the person. You would rather hold onto the hurt with the hopes of one day turning it back on them. You want to use the hurt they caused as an excuse to get even so you tell them to forget it, but you don’t forget it. **Revenge**, that’s a heart problem.

Maybe you can’t say it because you never heard it. Some of you grew up in a home where hurt was a part of living and therefore needed to be accepted, but never forgiven. You may have never had someone take responsibility for the wrong they caused and ask to be forgiven. You are hurting, and you’ve been told “that is life,” and because you’ve held onto your hurts, you’ve become bitter. **Bitterness**, that’s a heart problem.

Some of you have a hard time forgiving others because you cannot forgive yourself. You say, “It’s okay” because you know that everyone sins and there is no need to forgive, because you are in the same place they are. You may even wonder how you can forgive others when you know you are just as guilty. You don’t feel you have the right to forgive. **Guilt**, that’s a heart problem.

Finally, there might be those who just don’t think about the issue of forgiveness. One person said that it just sounds so serious. The thing is, if there has been an offense because of sin, then it is serious. I think many of us may fall into this category. Our culture has developed a casual or callous attitude toward sin and forgiveness with each other. This, in turn, may lead us to have a casual attitude about sin and forgiveness with God. I just can’t picture God saying, “Don’t worry about it.” **Callousness**, that’s a heart problem.

Would you place yourself in one of these categories? Why or why not?

I realize that you may not fit into one of these categories, but I am convinced that our society has lessened the impact of forgiveness. This does have a direct impact on the way we view God and His forgiveness. Maybe that is why it is so hard to share the gospel. People do not see their need to be forgiven.

Forgiveness...

- Removes the burden of guilt
- Releases the offender from responsibility
- Restores the relationship
- Deepens the relationship

When you have wronged someone and they forgive you, how does that make you feel?

There are several things that forgiveness does.

- **Removes the burden of guilt** – Forgiveness removes the burden of guilt that is upon those who have wronged someone. There is a burden of guilt that rests on those who have sinned. They may try to bury it, but it will not be released until they have sought forgiveness.
- **Releases the offender from responsibility** – Forgiveness tells the offender that you will no longer hold the offense against them. They are free. This is especially important when the enemy tries to bring the offense back up. The offender can respond with, “Do not bother me Satan, as I have been forgiven!”
- **Restores the relationship** – When an offense has taken place, it breaks a relationship. This is the case with God and others. Forgiveness restores the relationship that was broken. It sets the relationship back on track.
- **Deepens the relationship** – Forgiveness can also deepen the relationship, because to seek forgiveness is to admit a wrong. This is true honesty, which has the potential to deepen a relationship, which brings about more accountability so as to avoid an offense down the road.

We are called to forgive one another. If we choose not to forgive, then we are not obeying God. Some things are hard to forgive, but remember the comparative statement in Ephesians. We are to forgive JUST AS Christ forgave us. Forgiveness is possible.

Is there someone right now that God has placed on your heart? Do you need to forgive? Do you need to ask for forgiveness?

It is hard, but I am comforted by Matthew 19:26 – “With God ALL things are possible.”

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?
