

Grace Bible Church
2018 Biblical Counseling Conference
Track One



Session #15

Forgiveness

I. Why Should We Even Discuss Forgiveness?

- A. Man's greatest _____ is forgiveness. Without forgiveness he is doomed to eternal punishment. (Rom 6:23; Rev. 20:11-15)
- B. Forgiveness is necessary for _____. (Col 2:13)
- C. We are _____ to forgive others in the same way God has forgiven us. (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32)
- D. Seeking and _____ forgiveness is a prerequisite to mutual love, the strongest argument for the Christian faith. (Jn. 13:35)
- E. Unreconciled relationships between Christians _____ evangelism and rob churches of a positive community witness

"All of us get hurt from time to time, and most of us are hurt very badly at some point in our lives. But Christians have the incredible resource - and the responsibility to forgive. Not out of our own strength, but out of the strength God provides through our experience of His forgiveness... We can pray that God will help us love that person. Does this sound difficult? It's not difficult. It's impossible, unless you and I have feasted on the cross of Christ." ***A Call to Die***, David Nasser, p. 216

"One of the most significant problems in our marriage relationships is that there is no economy of grace. With all our obvious difficulties, what is most shocking is the profound gracelessness of our marriages. There's no willingness to look within and confess deep-seated sins, so we never find sweet forgiveness. There's no vertical hope to carry us in dark and discouraging times. There's no rest that comes from entrusting each other to the God of grace. There's no faith that God will give us all we need to respond to each other in godly ways. As a result, the relationship is reduced to human demands, human performance, human failure, human judgment, and human punishment. There is no hope or power for change. And because we're not daily soaking in the fountain of God's grace, we do not extend it to one another."

Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, Paul David Tripp, p. 32 & 33

II. Make Sure You Know What Forgiveness is *Not*

- A. Forgiveness is not a _____ (Lk. 17:3-10)

“Unforgiveness is like ringing a bell. As long as you pull the rope, the bell in the tower rings. Then you make a decision not to ring it anymore. You let go of the rope, and you are free of the unforgiveness. That's fine, but the bell keeps ringing for a while. Your hand is no longer on the rope. You no longer will it to ring, but the momentum of your emotions does not instantly stop because a decision of the will has been made.” ***Streams of Mercy***, Mark Rutland, p. 158-159

1. Forgiveness is to be **granted** when a sinner repents. (v. 3)
2. Forgiveness is to be granted **repeatedly** on the same day if a sinner repeatedly professes repentance (v. 4), something no one would feel like doing.
3. Christ declared that the disciples had the faith necessary to forgive and they did not need to wait until they felt **stronger** spiritually. (vv.5-6)
4. Forgiveness is a matter of **obedience**, not feelings. (vv. 7-10)
5. Forgiveness is to be granted whether they ever **come** to you and ask for forgiveness

B. Forgiveness is not _____

“No, the reality is that you will never forget until you forgive. Forgiveness is both the crisis and the process of putting a person's sin behind you. It is setting it aside and saying, “I won't think about that anymore. I won't focus on that anymore.” It's a choice that begins the process of forgetting. Unforgiveness binds the offense to your heart and ensures that you will never forget. Forgiveness is the first link in the chain of forgetting, not the reverse.” ***Seven Words to Change Your Family***, James MacDonald, p. 46

1. There is no **command** in the Bible telling us to forget before we forgive.
2. Neither is there scriptural support for the statement, “If you haven't forgotten, you haven't forgiven.” Forgetting is a frequent **by-product** of granting forgiveness biblically, but not always

Forgiveness is not you trying to _____ what that other person did ____ **you**. Forgiveness is your choice to _____ what Christ **already** did ____ **you** on the cross and to act on THAT by extending that same forgiveness out to others regardless of how you feel!

Matthew 18:27 “Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt... v. 32-33 You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?”

If you don't understand the depth of YOUR _____ sin against God... and HOW _____ He's forgiven you, then you'll never have what it takes to forgive other people around you.

3. References to God “forgetting” our sins (e.g. Is 43:25; Jer. 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.

C. Forgiveness is not _____ sin
Excusing is a form of minimizing sin, of not taking sin **seriously**.

D. Biblical forgiveness does not include forgiving _____.
- Booklet "Forgiveness ~ *I Just Can't Forgive Myself!*, Robert Jones

Psalm 86:5 "For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."

God is more ready to forgive than we are to ask.

It's really pride and arrogance that keeps people clinging to their guilt - refusing to come to God - and saying they just can't forgive themselves when God stands ready to forgive.

III. What Forgiveness Is

A. *Definition*: "Forgiveness is a lifting of the charge of **guilt** from another, a formal declaration of that fact and a promise (made and kept) never to remember the wrong against him in the future." Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: 1979), 229

"Forgiveness comes in two parts. It begins with a decision, an act of my will. We call this the CRISIS of forgiveness. When I make the choice to release a person from the obligation that resulted when he or she injured me, I am completing the crisis of forgiveness. I am not looking for vengeance; I am not trying to get even; I am not wishing for bad things to happen to them; and I am not focused on their failure. In fact, I am not thinking about them at all. I've released them from all obligation that resulted when they hurt me...

Beyond the crisis is the PROCESS of forgiveness, without which you will never experience the healing that forgiveness can bring. In the crisis of forgiveness we say, "I choose to forgive," but in the process we say, "I will treat you as though it never happened." **Seven Words to Change Your Family**, James MacDonald, p. 51 & 52

B. Forgiveness is a decision—a **promise** to:

1. Not **dwelling** on the incident mentally,
2. Not bring up the incident again and use it **against** the other person,
3. Not **talk** to others about the incident, and
4. Not allow the incident to stand **between** you and the other person or hinder your personal relationship with them.

NOTE: Forgiveness is not the same thing as TRUST. Forgiveness means that you give the offender the opportunity to re-earn your trust (which requires making yourself vulnerable).

C. Forgiveness is an act of the **will**, not the emotions.

"But I'll just say this from experience: I've watched believers 'working their way' toward forgiveness for years and years and never getting there. In fact, I might even go so far as to say that when forgiveness is seen primarily as a work in progress, it seldom becomes a work in practice." Nancy Leigh DeMoss, **Choosing Forgiveness**, p. 70

D. Forgiveness is a choice to **absorb** the cost of their sin against you.

“Everyone who forgives goes through a death... and experiences nails, blood, sweat, and tears... Forgiveness is costly suffering... forgiveness... at first always feels far worse than bitterness... Forgiveness means refusing to make them pay for what they did. However, to refrain from lashing out at someone when you want to do so with all your being is agony. It is a form of suffering. You not only suffer the original loss of happiness, reputation, and opportunity, but now you forgo the consolation of inflicting the same on them. You are absorbing the debt, taking the cost of it completely on yourself instead of taking it out on the other person. It hurts terribly. Many people would say it feels like a kind of death.” Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God*

IV. So Why Forgive?

A. God **commands** us to forgive others. (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)

Ephesians 4:32 “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, **even as** God in Christ forgave you.”

“Even as God in Christ forgave you.” This whole thing hinges on an ‘even as’ or ‘just as’

Colossians 3:13 “... if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as** Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

Matthew 18:33 “Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant, **just as** I had mercy on you?”

Forgiven people **forgive** sin!

B. Sin **requires** forgiveness if reconciliation is to occur. Simple apologies or making statements like, “That’s OK,” does not settle sin issues.

V. When Should We Forgive?

A. When we know God **requires** it; not when we feel like it.

B. **Every** time there is repentance: over and over again! (Matt 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4)

“Let’s be honest with each other: grudges can be fun! We enjoy withholding forgiveness because it permits us to keep our enemies (and even some of our friends) under control. It gives us the opportunity to manipulate them into providing things we want from them. We use their offense against us as a rope to dangle them over the fires of vengeance. If we were to completely forgive them, we would lose our excuse for self-pity. And forgiveness would set them free from their obligation to us to “make good.” Few things cut across the grain of human nature like forgiving others. Breathing is easy. Eating is fun. No one thinks twice about blinking their eyes. But forgiving others is sheer agony! It grates on our soul like fingernails on a chalkboard.” *To Love Mercy*, C. Samuel Storms, p. 153

C. When we know there is something **between** us and another person.

Matthew 11:23-24 “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Selected Resources

Jones, Robert D. “‘I Just Can’t Forgive Myself’: A Biblical Alternative to Self-Forgiveness.” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, volume 14, number 2, 1996, 22-25.

MacArthur, John F., Jr. *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998.

Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.