

Lesson 7: Forgiveness

1. Read Matthew 6:5-15.

According to verse 15, in what manner does God forgive us? _____

2. Read Matthew 18:21-35.

How many times are we commanded to forgive someone for the same offense? (v. 22) _____

Does Jesus mean that we are to keep count? _____

How much did the first servant owe his master? (v. 24) _____

What did the master do for him? (v. 27) _____

How much did the fellow slave owe the first slave? (v. 28) _____

What did the first slave do to him? (v. 30) _____

What was the master's response to this unforgiveness? (v. 32-35) _____

3. There are several lessons to be learned here:

- We are to be like God in forgiving people.
- We are to forgive as many times as a person sins against us.
- We are to respond to the grace given to us by giving grace.
- We will be *tormented* for being unforgiving.

(The following is a summary of the material found in Jeff Floyd's notebook "Axe to the Root", and may be purchased from Jubilee Ministries, Indianapolis, IN.)

4. According to Hebrews 12:15, *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;* what is the result of unforgiveness?

Unforgiveness is the result of failing to find grace in our time of need. Without the grace of God we are left to our own self-will and determination. But our natural response to injury is not forgiveness, but retaliation.

5. There are three groups of people who hurt us the most:

- Those we are closest to. (*loved ones, friends*), because they mean so much to us and what they do to us is important.
- Those we expect a great deal from. (*spiritual leaders, officials*), because our expectations are high.
- Those to whom we give respect and honor. (*well-known people*).

All three groups hurt us when they fail to treat us the way we believe that we should be treated. Instead of forgiving them for failing to treat us correctly, we take on hurt. This hurt is a sign of unforgiveness and is sin! Mark the following equation in your mind:

$$\text{offense} + \text{unforgiveness} = \text{hurt} = \text{sin}$$

6. There are two identifying marks of unforgiveness and bitterness:
- **Hurt:** While most Christians will not tell you that they are bitter or unforgiving, they will say that they are hurt. But hurt is proof of unforgiveness!

Let's look at an example. Suppose you are teaching a class of children and another adult tells you that you did a poor job explaining the verses to the children. Before you knew it a sense of hurt overwhelms you. You had worked hard on the lesson and felt that you had done the best job possible. You concluded that the person was simply trying to hurt you. You now have a choice: you can choose to ask God for grace to forgive the person, or you can become upset, angry, and defensive. The latter response is unforgiveness.

- **Anger.** For many, anger is all too prevalent. Generally when a person is unforgiving, anger will spring up when it otherwise would have been under control. This popping-up of anger is a sign of unforgiveness. Often the person with bitterness and unforgiveness will exhibit inappropriate anger. By this I mean a level of anger that is not equal to the offense.

When unforgiveness is harbored in the heart, anger will boil over before the person is able to stop it. The parent who yells at his child for little offenses; the child who hits his brother for no apparent reason; or the boss who explodes at the minor errors of his secretary are all examples of misplaced anger and unforgiveness. Read Proverbs 4:23, *Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*

What are we to guard? _____

Why? _____

An unguarded heart results in defilement.

Read Matthew 15:15-20. According to these verses, what defiles a person?

The following will help you clean up your heart so that you will not defile yourself and others.

7. Action guide for healing from hurts.

- Admit to yourself and to God that there are unresolved hurts in your heart.
- Give up the right to blame those who have offended you for the hurt which you have accepted as a legitimate part of your life.
- Confess to a responsible and spiritually wise person the presence of these hurts and your intention to address them by the healing power of God.
- Pray the prayer of forgiveness for **each person** who has hurt you, **specifically** addressing **each hurtful memory** of this experience.
- Begin to immediately implement the following steps to cement healing and to restore fellowship with the offender(s):
 - a. *Renounce all negative feelings toward him/her.*
 - b. *Receive him/her as he/she is.*
 - c. *Restore him/her to your personal favor.*
 - d. *Rejoice about him/her in and out of his/her presence.*
 - e. *Respond to him/her in a loving and godly fashion.*
 - f. *Resist the devil's attempt for ruin your relationship.*
 - g. *Rest in the Lord.*

8. The Prayer of Forgiveness.

*The following prayer agenda was developed over many years and includes every detail necessary to set you free. Do not leave any part out!
The italicized-bold words are important parts of the prayer:*

Dear Heavenly Father,

It is **my choice** today to forgive (*name the person who offended you*)

...for the offense which he/she brought against me (*describe the offense briefly*).

I forgive him/her **unconditionally** for the things done which brought hurt in my life.

I **drop every charge** which I have brought against him/her and **give up the right** to ever charge him/her again for this offense.

I **cancel every judgment** I have made against him/her.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ **I release** him/her **from all responsibility** for the hurt which he/she caused me regardless of how badly I was hurt.

Heavenly Father, I drop every charge I've had against you for permitting this to happen to me and please forgive me for any way that I have blamed you in this offense.

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As I have forgiven _____ for the hurt I have experienced, please forgive me of my hurt, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness.

Holy Spirit, *please come and heal my thoughts, my emotions and my memories* from all the damage and defilement caused by my offense.

Thank you, Father, for my healing.

(It may be necessary to repeat the prayer. Continue until you have peace.)

9. There are several things about the previous prayer you must understand:
 - Hurt is a choice to refuse to forgive, and therefore is sin.
 - Forgiveness is not dependent upon the one you are forgiving.
 - Once forgiven, the offender is free from all charges.
 - The Holy Spirit will cleanse you to the same degree as you forgive.
10. Use this prayer consistently to keep your heart pure. Every time the Lord shows you unforgiveness in your heart, pray!