

# FAMILY LIFE: FORGIVENESS

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**OPEN:** Look around you, what do you see? You may not know it, but you're looking at people who have been hurt deeply.

- ✓ Many of these hurts have come from one's own family.
  - A father that has wounded his daughter... "you are nothing but trash, you'll never amount to anything" and she carries the scars into her marriage.
  - A wife that has divorced her husband...she met someone at work that makes her happy...the children don't understand why mom and dad can't work it out.
  - A young girl looking for acceptance from her boyfriend and she has chosen to give him what he wants...they had sex last month but now he is with another girl and now she feels "played" and used...she doesn't feel "pretty" anymore.
  - You've worked hard, gave the company your best years of your life and now they are trying to push you out...don't they know you can't retire yet?
  - This world is full of hurts and injustice and it can change a person...it can make you bitter...little by little your hurt hardens, your personality changes and you don't let anyone get close again.

❖ The very thought of forgiveness tics you off...

- ✓ "You don't know what they did to me!"
- ✓ "They lied about me over and over again!"
- ✓ "She intended to destroy my career and she did."
- ✓ "You can't imagine the hell I've been through."

- ✓ “If you knew what this has done to my family, you would be angry too.”
  - ✓ “They deserve to suffer like they made me suffer.”
  - ✓ “I’m going to make them pay!”
  - ✓ “My daughter was raped...I was sexually abused...how do you forgive that?”
  - ✓ “I will never forgive that man...never!”
- ❖ Forgiveness is that gift that we are happy (thankful) to receive from God, but find it difficult to give to others.
- ✓ What WD-40 is to a “stubborn bolt”...may the Word of God begin to soften your heart.
- Jesus said: **Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)** – <sup>14</sup>If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.<sup>15</sup> But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.
  - **Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)** - ...be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
  - **Colossians 3:13 (NLT)** – Make allowance for each other’s faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.
  - Okay, I get it preacher...I will forgive those I love when they hurt me...what about those who don’t love me? I don’t love them they are mean and nasty?
    - ✓ The crowd laughed at His pain...mocked, cheered on His tormentors...hanging on the cross the “Innocent One” uttered these words: **Luke 23:34a (NLT)** – Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”
      - Those who put Jesus to death were quite pleased with themselves...hatred filled the air.

- No one said: “this is wrong, we made a mistake, we are fools...yet Jesus offered forgiveness.

❖ In case you about to tune me out...let me tell you what forgiveness is not:

- ✓ It doesn't mean you approve of what someone else did.
- ✓ It doesn't mean you pretend the evil never took place.
- ✓ It doesn't mean you make excuses for someone's bad behavior.
- ✓ It doesn't mean justifying the evil so it becomes less sinful.
- ✓ It doesn't mean overlooking abuse.
- ✓ It doesn't mean denying that others tried to hurt you repeatedly.
- ✓ It doesn't mean letting others walk all over you.
- ✓ It doesn't mean you refuse to press charges when a crime has been committed.
- ✓ It doesn't mean you must tell the person that you have forgiven them.
- ✓ It doesn't mean that all negative consequences of sin are cancelled.

❖ Let's listen in on Jesus' instructions concerning forgiveness **Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT)**

1) **TRUE FORGIVENESS SEEKS RECONCILIATION** (disclaimer: you can forgive without becoming best friends again...some relationships don't need to be reconciled...when there has been abuse, unrepentance). ***(Pro Presenter Slide Bulletin Outline)***

- Go to the person alone (privately).

- ✓ Two people working out a misunderstanding...best case scenario...they listen and you gain your “brother's” (friend) back.

- What if things don't go well?...take one or two witnesses with you...(choose calm level headed people who can help resolve the conflict).
- If the person refuses to acknowledge what they have done...involve the church leadership.
  - ✓ If they maintain their unrepentant attitude, then treat them as an unbeliever...(they are acting as if they are not a believer).
    - The idea is not merely to punish the offender, or to shun them completely but to remove them as a detrimental influence...regard them as an evangelistic prospect then a brother.
  - ✓ You turn the person over to God for judgment and they are removed from the church role.
    - This may happen because a person won't admit they are wrong or they have a different point of view...we have all met stubborn, toxic people.
    - Sometimes their only interest is to control you or the situation.
- Forgiveness can be offered even when reconciliation cannot.

## 2) THERE IS NO LIMIT TO **FORGIVENESS**. (PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)

**Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)** - <sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" <sup>22</sup> "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

- ✓ Peter thought he was being rather generous when he suggested we forgive someone seven times.
    - The rabbis taught that God forgave Israel's enemies three times and it was presumption to forgive someone more than that.
- ❖ Let's read Jesus' parable: **Matthew 18:23-25**

- What do we learn?
  - ✓ Forgiveness is costly – in order for the king to forgive his servant, he wiped the “debt slate” clean.
- The man had accumulated a mountain of debt.
- At first, the king ordered him to be thrown in debtor prison, along with his wife and children.
- He falls on his knees and begs for patience.
  - ✓ In the story the king represents God.
- We are the debtor and we have accumulated many sins.
- Truth be told...we could never pay our debt.
- Just as the king forgives the man of his debt, God forgives us.
  - ✓ Is forgiveness free? Depends on which side of the equation you are on.
- For the king...releasing the man of his debt meant he would never see those funds again.
  - ✓ For the servant, forgiveness was a gift.
- ❖ Forgiveness was a costly gift for the king...and so it is with God.
  - For God to forgive us, He gave His only begotten Son – Jesus.
  - Salvation is a gift we receive, we could never pay for it.
- This is also true when you forgive someone that has wronged you...
- You are not going to use their offense as a weapon any longer...you are not going to get even.
- Forgiveness always costs the person doing the forgiving.

### 3) THOSE FORGIVEN SHOULD FORGIVE. (PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)

- The man forgiven of the huge debt would not forgive the man who owed him a small debt.
  - ✓ He demands the man pay him...even gets violent (grabs him and chokes him).
  - ✓ He had the man arrested and thrown into debtor's prison (here he would work to pay off his debt).
  - ✓ Was he wrong to demand payment? It was a matter of justice...he owed the man and he ought to pay the man.
    - Though justice was on his side, didn't he have a moral obligation to forgive...he had been shown mercy, but he wasn't willing to extend it.
    - When the word reached the king of his actions, he calls him into account...**shouldn't you have shown your fellow servant mercy?**
  - ✓ He was delivered to the jailer...to his torturer.
- Thankfully, God's forgiveness is irrevocable; the point...when we choose not to forgive we confine ourselves to the "torture chamber."
  - ✓ Harboring resentment poisons one's own meal at the banquet table.
  - ✓ When you forgive others, you make for yourself a better future...your spirit can begin to soar again.
  - ✓ Resentment is allowing the person who wronged you to control you...you can't sleep, your family and friends see the anger within you. Don't you think the person has hurt you enough? Let it go.
  - ✓ Choose to lay the bitterness down and walk out of your self-made prison.

#### 4) TRUE FORGIVENESS IS A **CHOICE**. *(PRO PRESENTER SLIDE BULLETIN OUTLINE)*

- You can't wait until the hurt is gone or you feel like forgiving...your poisoning your relationship with others.
  - ✓ Some teach...you don't forgive unless the person asks for forgiveness and while that would be the best scenario...it may not happen.
  - ✓ Reconciliation may not be possible or advisable...
    - The person may have died; they are dangerous or hateful...
    - To keep from being controlled by them or letting bitterness give you ulcers...choose to forgive and turn the matter over to God.

**1 Peter 2:23 (NLT)** – He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threatened revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

- Commit your case to the Supreme Judge of the Universe.
- Trust God to take care of the injustice you have suffered.
- You may have to rehearse this again and again until you find wholeness and freedom...forgiveness is often a process.
- ❖ Take time today and pour your heart out to God...if you have never received His forgiveness start there...He offers to forgive you of your sins.
  - He that extends to you forgiveness is requiring you to forgive.

**CLOSE:** Forgiveness sounds like a lovely idea until you have to do it...then it becomes difficult.

(1) True forgiveness seeks reconciliation.

(2) There is no limit to forgiveness.

(3) Those forgiven should forgive.

(4) True forgiveness is a choice.

❖ You are never more like Christ then when you forgive.

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