



Forgive and Forget

Colossians 3:12-13

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.



Here is the BIG IDEA in this lesson:

If we have truly experienced God's forgiveness, we will forgive others.

Introduction:

A pastor's wife and their son had been to a shopping mall where the boy had acted badly, wanting this and that, running off, etc. As they were driving home, he could sense her displeasure and said, "If we ask God to forgive us when we are bad, He does, doesn't He?" His mother replied, "Yes, He does." The boy continued, "And when He forgives us, He buries our sins in the deepest sea, doesn't He?" The mom replied, "Yes, that's what the Bible says." The boy was silent for a while and then said, "I've asked God to forgive me, but I bet when we get home, you're going to go fishing for those sins, aren't you?"

Too often, we "go fishing" for other people's sins that God has already buried. Horace Bushnell once said, "Forgiveness is man's deepest need and God's highest achievement." However, once a man truly experiences divine forgiveness, it always results in a life of forgiveness toward others. Forgiveness is not only a command for the Christian, it is also a means (vehicle or instrument) of grace. Make no mistake about it, forgiveness is an electric issue! Touch it the wrong way and it will send waves of pain throughout one's entire life. On the other hand, if you experience it the way God desires you to, it will be a blessing to your life and to others around you. Practically, some "hot" questions pop up when we raise this issue. Let's discuss them:

- When does one need to ask for forgiveness?
- Should we offer forgiveness if a person is not seeking it?
- How can you recognize or know if you have really forgiven someone?
- How do you deal with the broken trust and deep scars that have resulted from being hurt in the past?

In this study on forgiving one another, we will consider some *key questions*, *key principles*, and *key practices*.



Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

A. KEY QUESTIONS: Getting below the surface and addressing the real issues

1. What does forgiveness really mean and what does it look like?

To “*forgive*” (Gk. “*aphiemi*”) in both its verb and noun forms in the New Testament carries with it two primary ideas:

- To send away, to forgive, or to completely cancel a debt (*Matt.6:12; 18:27*). The chief idea here is *the canceling of debt by the payment of a price without an obligation of repayment*.
- To bestow favor unconditionally (Gk. “*charizomai*”) (*Eph.4:32; Luke 7:42-43; 2 Cor.2:7, 10*)

It is impossible to ransack all of the elements that comprise the doctrine of forgiveness, so let’s be clear on the essentials.

Biblical forgiveness is not a passing over or passing by sin. It is not the *overlooking or condoning* of a wrong. This cheapens the view of the cross. Forgiveness is not the *avoidance* of punishment. In Acts 17:30, God is said to have “*overlooked the times of ignorance*,” but this only means that there was a suspension of the just penalty until Christ came (*Cf. Rom.3:25*).

The need for forgiveness always means that the Law of God has been violated. In other words, *a sin has taken place*; a direct transgression of His Law—not our *preferences*—requires forgiveness. Remember, all of our sins are like an IOU, indebting us to God for crimes against His moral law (*Rom.3:20*). Our sin debts *before God* create an obstacle to fellowship *with God* and they are impossible for us to deal with.

The good news is not that God was just *willing* to forgive us; the good news is the *way* in which He forgives. God’s forgiveness is *complete* and *final* (*2 Cor.5:19; Ps.103:12*); it results in the full restoration of the offender to favor with God. And, it involves the removal of the sins from the sinner by blotting them out or wiping them away, so that no remembrance of them remains (*Col.2:14; Heb.10:17-18*).

The conditions for divine forgiveness are repentance, confession, and faith (*Matt.18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 3:19; 10:43; 1 John 1:9*). Once the conditions are met, there is no limitation to the forgiveness of Christ, although there may be consequences (*1 John 5:16*). Whatever we understand forgiveness to be, it must be consistent with divine forgiveness. Stated plainly, our standard of forgiveness must be patterned after God’s.

2. **True forgiveness** could be summarized in three elements: to cancel a debt, to remove its remembrance, and to restore the offender. What if one element was missing? Why would it fall short of God’s way of forgiveness?

3. Read Ephesians 4:32. Why do we as Christians (of all people) need to be commanded to practice forgiveness? (*Cf. 1 Cor.4:7*)
4. According to Matthew 6:14-15, how does an unforgiving spirit affect one's spiritual life?
5. What does a forgiving spirit demonstrate? Read Colossians 3:12-13.
6. What are the signs that you need to forgive someone? Ask yourself these three questions:
 - Is there acceptance without reservation?
 - Is there forgiveness without condemnation?
 - Is there pardon without probation?
7. How do you deal with the pain caused by people who have wronged you in the past?
 - Be willing to ask God to teach you how to forgive.
 - Be mindful that all things work together for good to God's people. (*Rom.8:28*)
 - Be patient—scars take time to heal.

B. **KEY PRINCIPLES:** Identifying what Scripture teaches about forgiveness

1. It requires faith. (*Luke 17:3-5*)
2. It must come from the heart. (*Matt.18:21-35*)
3. It involves comfort that fortifies the person and the church from Satan's schemes. (*2 Cor.2:4-11*)



Application: Making Truth Stick

A little boy came to the Washington Monument and noticed a guard standing by it. The little boy looked up at the guard and said, "I want to buy it." The guard stooped down asked, "How much do you have?" The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter. The guard said, "That's not enough." The boy replied, "I thought you would say that." So he pulled out nine cents more. The guard looked at the boy and said, "You need to understand three things. First, thirty-four cents is not enough. In fact, thirty-four million dollars is not enough to buy the Washington Monument. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale. And third, if you are an American citizen, the Washington Monument already belongs to you."

We need to understand three things about forgiveness:

- First, *we cannot earn it.*
- Second, *it is not for sale.*
- Third, if we receive Christ as Lord and Savior, *we already have it!*

Have you received Christ as Lord and Savior? If so, remember, forgiveness is not manufactured by looking inward; it is produced by looking upward—to Christ. Are you looking up?

KEY PRACTICES: Refuse to let the sun go down on your anger (*Eph.4:26*) and remember God’s grace in your life (*Titus 3:3*).

Being a doer of the Word (2 Tim.3:16)

1. What did I learn (“teaching”)?
2. Where do I fall short (“reproof”)?
3. What do I need to do about it (“correction”)?
4. How can I make this a consistent part of my life (“training”)?

Answer Key

Lesson: Thinking Truth Through

A.

2. to cancel a debt, to remove its remembrance, and to restore the offender
3. because we have received it
4. it does not change our position or salvation, however, it does affect our fellowship with God
5. we have been chosen by God

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