

We should forgive others as Christ has forgiven us

Many Christians would agree that God's expectation that *we should forgive others as Christ has forgiven us* is one of the most challenging aspects of being a disciple of His.

Jesus could not have been clearer when He said, "If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:15). It's only fair that we should not expect God to forgive us if we've been unwilling to forgive others. But we need to be careful. Making sure God forgives us must not be our primary motive. If in forgiving others we had no higher motivation than to secure God's forgiveness for ourselves, that would be a selfish motive.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that a failure to treat others rightly (including forgiving them when they have wronged us) is detrimental to our relationship with God. Our prayers and our worship will mean nothing to God as long as we do not treat others as we should (Mt. 5:24; 1 Pt. 3:7; etc.). Broken relationships with those around us will break our relationship with God if we do not take the initiative to mend those relationships as He would want us to (Mt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; etc.).

Too often, even when we say we've forgiven someone who wronged us, our forgiveness falls short of what we hope for from the Lord when we come to Him for forgiveness. So the challenge before us is this: have we not only said the words "I forgive you," but have we let Jesus teach us by His example what forgiveness really looks like? In need of reconciliation, would we be content to get no more from Him than what we extend to others when we say we have forgiven them?

A good friend of mine (who has now gone home to be with the Lord) once said, "In order to forgive us, God had to give up on the idea that we would ever understand how deeply we had hurt Him." Where would any of us be if God made His friendship as hard to get back as we often make our own?

As this year winds down and we look to the beginning of a new year, this will be a good time for us to ponder this area of our growth in Jesus Christ. Let's think — and discuss — ways we can improve our willingness to forgive others, as well as the manner in which we extend that forgiveness.

Monday: Matthew 6:12,14,15

Key Idea: If we have not been forgiving toward other people, God will not be forgiving toward us.

Questions for Family Growth: What are the "debts" Jesus spoke of in v.12? In practical terms, what does it mean to cancel a debt or forgive a sin? Is there ever a time to forgive someone when they have not asked us for forgiveness? What did Jesus say about our prayers in Mk. 11:25?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 30:7-9.

Tuesday: Matthew 18:21-35

Key Idea: God has forgiven each of us of far more than we will ever have to forgive in others.

Questions for Family Growth: How many times did Jesus say we should forgive others? How do our sins against God compare to those that others have committed against us? In **v.32**, what word did Jesus use to describe the unforgiving servant? What does “from your heart” (**v.35**) mean?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:10.**

Wednesday: Ephesians 4:32

Key Idea: God’s forgiveness of our own sins should be a motivation for us to forgive others.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean that we are to forgive others “as God in Christ forgave you”? In the first part of the verse, what are the two character traits that are linked to a forgiving spirit? How does the principle in **Phil. 2:4** apply to the forgiveness of others?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:11-14.**

Thursday: Colossians 3:12-15

Key Idea: Forgiveness of others is an outgrowth of love, humility, and other Christian virtues.

Questions for Family Growth: In addition to “forgiving each other,” how many other character traits or virtues can you find in this text that are related to our forgiveness of others? What does the “bond of perfection” (**v.14 NKJV**) mean? What is the goal set before us as Christians in **v.15**?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:15,16.**

Friday: Luke 7:36-50

Key Idea: As in all things, Jesus is our example in the matter of forgiving others.

Questions for Family Growth: How was Jesus’ treatment of the woman different from Simon’s? What can we learn from this story about the manner in which our forgiveness to others should be extended? What does Paul say in **Gal. 6:1,2** about the spirit in which we should help the fallen?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 30:17.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com