

Do you remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was?

Matthew 22: 37–39 NKJV

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Jesus emphasized in a big way the importance of relationships

This is what life is about—loving God, loving yourself, and loving others

- It is never wrong to love
- It is never out of order to love
- You do not compromise when you love
- You never lower your standards when you love

God’s Love Never Fails!

1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.

Seventy Times Seven

Matthew 18:21–22 (NKJV)

²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

- Perhaps Peter had someone in mind that he had just forgiven six times and was ready to right them off
- Whether the case or not, he was looking for a formula for forgiveness
- Jesus wasn’t saying 490 times was the magic number and then you’re done
- The truth is that most of us are better at keeping score than we are at forgiving
- We seem to have photographic memories when it comes to holding a grudge
- The year, the month, the precise time of day of every single offense that has come our way

“My spouse criticized the way I look.” Check. “Then he (she) forgot my birthday.” Check. “Then he (she) refused to have sex with me, blaming it on a headache I know he (she) didn’t have.” Check. “My co-worker took credit for my project.” Check. “Then she took credit for my work.” Check. “Then she made a snide remark about my job performance.” Check. And on and on and on.

No matter how many times you've been hurt, the bible is clear on one thing: You must forgive

- We are all going to get hurt in some way
- Your spouse will let you down
- Someone might gossip about you
- Someone might steal your money
- Someone might steal your husband
- Someone may have abused you
- Someone may have harmed your child
- We must live a lifestyle of constant forgiveness

“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have to forgive someone.” – C.S. Lewis

- Forgiveness is like money. We want to get it, not give it.

The truth is, its unforgiveable to not forgive

Matthew 6:14–15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

- If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you
- If you're human, you have something you need God to forgive you for
- Forgive those who have wronged you, betrayed you, cursed you, harmed and abused you

All of us carry debts we can not pay

Matthew 18:23–27 (NKJV)

²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

- A talent was the equivalent of one thousand dollars today
- The servant was in the hole for ten million dollars
- Most of us wouldn’t have an extra ten million laying around

This has a deeper meaning, in direct reference to our sin debt

- Jesus is our King
- He knows we owe Him
- He knows we have not paid up
- He knows our outstanding debts

So, what does the king do when the servant begs for mercy?

- He forgives him the debt and lets him go
- This is exactly what Jesus does for us through the cross

Jesus forgives us, over and over and over

- He forgives the vows we make and break
- He forgives all the lying, cheating and stealing that we do
- He forgives our nasty attitudes
- He forgives our gluttonous appetites
- He forgives our idolatry
- He forgives the stuff we look at on the computer

He forgives our addictions, our toxic behaviors, our gripes, our hatred, our bias, our prejudices

- Jesus forgives us, PERIOD!

The servant must have left the palace on a high

- His slate is wiped clean
- He is no longer weighed down with a staggering financial burden
- He can finally get a good night's sleep

On his way home

Matthew 18:28–35 (NKJV)

²⁸ “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ ³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. ³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

- If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you

The truth is that sometimes the best in you won’t be released until the worst has been done to you

- God doesn’t intend for the painful experiences in your life to destroy you
- Opposition can bring out the best in you

It may not happen overnight, and you will need Holy Spirit’s help

- Don’t put it off – Start today
- Pray, and keep on praying
- Forgive and keep forgiving
- Patience has a perfect work – **James 1:2-4**

Matthew 7:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

- Ask, seek, knock
- Little by little God will help you release forgiveness
- When you are on your knee’s miracles happen
- It’s hard to hate someone you’re praying for
- Forgiveness will come if you don’t give up

When you struggle with unforgiveness it will show

- It will affect other relationships
- Bitterness will make you do, and say crazy things

When you hold on to a grievance or hate you will start to decay

- Emotionally, spiritually, and physically

Mayo Clinic:

Holding a grudge has a negative effect on the cardiovascular and nervous systems. One study has shown that people who thought about an offense regularly experienced high blood pressure, elevated heart rates and increased muscle tensions.

Forgiveness holds the key to freedom, to healing, to wholeness

Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots.

- The Roman soldiers were casting lots for His garments
- His body was stretched out on two pieces of splintered wood
- The crowd was cursing Him with raised fists
- Spitting on Him, plucking His beard and calling Him a good for nothing
- He pleads for forgiveness for the ones doing this to Him

As he is uttering these words...

Luke 23:46 (NKJV)

⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, *‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’*” Having said this, He breathed His last.

- In one hour, forgiveness saved the world
- His spirit could only be released in an atmosphere of forgiveness
- Before He could leave this earth, Jesus had to forgive those who were torturing and mocking Him
- God’s hands will not touch spirits that don’t release forgiveness

Wherever there is forgiveness there is a release of the Holy Spirit

Matthew 27:51–52 (NKJV)

⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

- The power of forgiveness caused heaven and earth to collide
- In this way Jesus disarmed principalities and spiritual rulers

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

- Forgiveness disarms the forces of darkness
- Un-forgiveness allows them to wreak havoc in your life

When you forgive you release God's power in our lives to bring healing and deliverance

James 5:13–15 (NKJV)

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

- The first healing ever recorded in scripture is not of a human being
- God heals waters that were bitter – Exodus 15
- God healed bitterness
- He knew that if He could get forgiveness released and bitterness out, healing would come
- When you forgive, you release the power of healing

“Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.” – Corrie ten Boom

Imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp for helping Jews escape the holocaust

- Often witnessed brutal beatings of prisoners
- Including her own sister who eventually died in a camp

For years after her miraculous release she often spoke in churches about her experience

One night after speaking on the need to forgive she saw a Nazi guard in the crowd

- One who had been in the same prison camp
- One who had been cruel to her sister
- He approached her and asked her forgiveness

My blood seemed to freeze . . . I whose sins had every day to be forgiven—and could not. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could not have been many seconds that he stood there, hand held out, but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do. And still I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. . . Mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. *“I forgive you, brother!” I cried. “With all my heart!”*

- What’s stopping you?
- Forgiveness doesn’t mean you forget what happened
- You don’t need to pretend that it never happened
- When you forgive you do not deny the offense?
- It happened, it was real, and it was bad

The weight of unforgiveness will drag you down

- It’s too heavy a load for the race set before you
– **Hebrews 12**
- Not forgiving others will always lead to great bitterness
- It will drain you of peace and joy
- When you forgive you are released of the torment

The offense will eventually become the point of reference for how far you have come in the healing process

Forgiveness doesn't release the offender from consequences

- It is not wrong to seek justice
- If someone commits a crime, they deserve to do the time

Vengeance is not, however, ours to carry out

Romans 12:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.

Forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation

It doesn't mean you need to rebuild a relationship with someone who never apologizes or refuses to accept the wrong they've done

- You are not designed to be a crash test dummy

Take these steps towards forgiveness

- Open your heart
- Extend compassion
- Release the person from the prison of your heart
- Forgiveness is a decision
- Choose to forgive