

Forgiving Like Joseph
12-8-13

Matthew 5:5, 7, 9 *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.....Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.....Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

Matthew 5:38-41 *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two."*

Matthew 6:14-15 *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

In Jesus' First Sermon – the Sermon on the Mount – Jesus said:

- You cannot be of God without forgiving
- You cannot hold your "right" to vengeance
- You cannot be forgiven without forgiveness

How do we learn to forgive? The world rejects it; our desires reject it

Forgiving Like Joseph:

In Genesis 37: His brothers hurt him terribly; His father had been hurt; He lost so much. How could he forgive? In Genesis 45:1-15: He saw the bigger picture; He loved his brothers; He loved his father. We can learn to forgive by these three points.

1. Seeing a Bigger Picture - Consider your own forgiveness. Jesus taught this in Matthew 18:23-35 when he said *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses"*. Paul reminded the Corinthians of this in I Corinthians 6:11
2. Loving Others - Consider the mind of those who wronged you. Paul reminds others of his mindset in sin: *"...I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."* (1 Timothy 1:13). Paul reminded the Corinthians of this in 2 Corinthians 2:7.
3. Loving Your Father – Consider God's desire for unity. *"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."* (Philippians 2:1-2)

One question we have about this is when do I forgive? Consider that while God forgives ONLY when we repent (Acts 17:30), ONLY He is permitted to hold a grudge (Romans 12:19). Joseph made this point to his brothers in Genesis 50:19. Also remember that ONLY His forgiveness removes sin (Mark 2:7b, Luke 5:21b). Our forgiveness therefore is not about taking away their sin, but making sure we do not sin.

His command is to forgive: *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."* (Mark 11:25-26). Consider the absolute nature of this statement: *"anything against anyone"*. We have no authority to hold a grudge; we need to learn to forgive so that we can be forgiven.