

Four Basics of Forgiveness

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One of the fundamental concepts of Christianity is forgiveness. We summarize this as the basis for the reason that Jesus Christ came to earth, died and then arose. Our forgiveness is the hope of the Gospel. At the same time, the ability to forgive is also a fundamental of our faith. Jesus taught this in places such as Matthew 6:14-15 and Matthew 18:21-35. Later others reminded us to forgive in Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13. We cannot go to heaven if we do not learn to forgive.

But if we are honest, we all struggle with forgiveness. Sometimes it is in the form of resentment which builds up within us. Maybe it is in holding a grudge against someone for something. Maybe it is a “root of bitterness” buried in our heart. It would be fair to say that just about everyone struggles to forgive; but we also need to admit that this struggle is greatest to those who are closest to us. Wounds by family, friends and brethren are the deepest. There are certain things we need to learn about forgiveness in order to forgive.

Forgiveness is NOT Deserved

We struggle to forgive over deservedness. In other words, we ask question like “Are they really sorry?” “Do they know what they did?” “Can they appreciate how much it hurt?” These questions reveal that our issue can be over the fairness and deservedness of forgiveness. Forgiveness is NOT about their deservedness; it is about YOUR faithfulness to God. As God has requested it on His deservedness, then our willingness to forgive is based in that measure. The inability to forgive usually resides in worldly mindsets. We need to have a Godly mindset to forgive.

Seeing From God’s View

Putting on Godliness is the idea of seeing things from God’s perspective. We are told we need to have the mind of Christ. In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus used a parable to describe God’s perspective in our forgiving others. Consider for a moment the wrongs in your life that you need to forgive. Do they measure to the wrongs you may have committed against God? God’s view of our sins is that we are guilty of the murder of His son (Heb. 6:6), adultery of His covenant (James 4:4), and ingratitude for His blessings (Heb. 10:29). It is wrong for us to hold others without forgiveness when we have done much worse to God. Yet He will forgive us IF we forgive others. Growing in godliness makes forgiving others easier.

Learning to Let It Go

Many struggle with HOW to forgive. They struggle because the wrong keeps coming to mind. They may say “I can’t just let it go” because a grievance seems to have value. It is like a rock thrown through a window; dropping that rock means we cannot throw it back, and our window was broken without any care. But this is the world speaking to us. Truthfully, you CAN let it go. In fact, it does you no good to keep it. There is no reason you cannot forgive and let it go.

Benefits of Forgiveness

The most remarkable story of forgiveness is recorded in Genesis 50:19-22. There Joseph (who had been sold into slavery and prison by his brothers) makes clear to his brothers he has let go of any bitterness. There are great blessings to forgiving. The first is that we receive the forgiveness of God. But as Joseph reveals, we also receive the blessings of God. Finally, Joseph also reveals that we receive a restoration of blessings lost.