

Opening: Share a story

1. Forgiveness is a command:

Colossians 3:12-13 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (NIV=New International Version)

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 "and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.... ¹⁴If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins." (NLT=New Living Translation)

*Jesus never asks who is right or wrong, He just commands us to forgive.

* Verse 14 has nothing to do with our salvation, but You can't live in the freedom of God's forgiveness if you're living in unforgiveness, anger, bitterness or hate toward someone else. If we live this way we lose out on having intimate fellowship with God. (Matthew 18:21-35) The forgiveness of the unmerciful servant is revoked. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." (NIV)

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." (NIV)

*We are not only told to forgive but to ask for forgiveness and be reconciled to our brother or sister.

Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (NIV)

- Remember, you are not responsible for the response of the one you're forgiving or asking for forgiveness from, that's not your responsibility, it's theirs.

2. How many times are we to forgive someone?

Matthew 18:21-22 "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²²Jesus answered, I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (NIV)

*Jesus is saying, Live a life of continual forgiveness and grace. Keeping you free from the destruction that unforgiveness can cause in your life.

3. Forgiveness is a choice:

It is not a natural feeling, you will not feel like forgiving when someone abandons, betrays, abuses you or offends you or hurts you in some way. Therefore, we must willingly choose to forgive them.

*In our nature we would want to take revenge on that person, but the bible says.....

Romans 12:19 "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord." (NIV)

*God's vengeance is always perfect; our vengeance will just complicate the matter and make the situation worse.

Proverbs 24:17-18 "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the Lord will see and disapprove and turn His wrath from them." (NIV)

4. When you choose to forgive call on the Father to give you the power to forgive.

Romans 8:12-13 "Therefore brothers and sisters, we have an obligation-but it's not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." (NIV)

*In the power of God's Spirit with your choice to forgive you will be able to work out forgiveness for someone.

5. Forgiveness is a process

6. Forgiveness is complete when you can remember what the person did to you, but it doesn't have any effect on you any longer.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS AND ISN'T.

THE MYTHS OF FORGIVENESS:

- A. If I forgive, I lose, and they win! No! You win because you are set free from the pain and bondage of unforgiveness and you have released them to the correction of God.
- B. If I forgive, I won't be angry anymore. Not true, it might take a while for forgiveness to take its course so even after you chose to forgive you might still feel angry until forgiveness has been completed.
- C. If I forgive, I will forget. No, you won't forget but when forgiveness has been completed in you, you will remember but the offense won't bother you anymore.
- D. If I forgive, I must continue the relationship. Not necessarily, Ask the Lord. (abusive relationships etc.).
- E. My forgiveness gives approval of their actions. No, my forgiveness releases them to the Lord so He can correct them.
- F. Remember forgiveness is being obedient to the lord, a decision and a process.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Are you struggling to forgive Someone?
- 2. Are you avoiding someone you need to ask forgiveness from?
- 3. Does this sermon/teaching give some clarity on what forgiveness is and is not?
- 4. Have you ever lived through the process of forgiving someone/What was your experience like?

