

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48208
Nathan Johnson, Senior Pastor

“Forgiving One Another”

DATE: November 2005

OPENING PRAYER:

LESSON SCRIPTURE: “Be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”. Ephesians 4:32 (King James Version).

“And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”. Ephesians 4:32 (New King James Version).

“And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” Ephesians 4:32 (The Holman Christian Standard Bible)

“Instead be kind and merciful, and forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ.” Ephesians 4:32 (Contemporary English Version)

“Instead be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32 (New Living Translation)

“And become useful, helpful, and kind to one another, tenderhearted (compassionate, understanding, loving hearted), forgiving one another (readily and freely), as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 (Amplified Bible)

GOAL: To grasp an understanding of true forgiveness and to practice it in our lives.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Share your understanding of true forgiveness.
2. Examine and analyze scriptures to discover Jesus’ example for “true forgiveness”.
3. Demonstrate and apply true forgiveness in daily Christian relationships.

ESSENTIAL INSIGHT/ QUESTION:

Human nature often compels us to “teach people a lesson” or seek revenge as a way of getting back for a “wrong” we have experienced, but it never works. Jesus offers a better solution. There should be no revenge or bare restitution. He suggests simply that we become the “shock absorbers”¹ of this world in that we exhibit humility, patience, and

¹ Swindol, Charles R., Becoming a People of Grace

kindness towards others who wrong us. What practical steps of faith should Christians take to become “shock absorbers” for true forgiveness?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Time: About 60 – 64 A.D. Place: Rome

Ephesians is one of the seven prison epistles written by Paul who was incarcerated in Rome. Tychicus delivered this epistle along with other letters to Philemon and the churches of Collosia and Philippi.

Paul founded the church in Ephesus during his second missionary journey. He assigned Priscilla and Aquila whom he had met in Corinth to teach the Gospel. Later the Church was strengthened and firmly established by Paul during his third missionary journey where he pastored three years. Upon Paul’s departure, Timothy headed the Church for about eighteen months. Timothy was constantly in conflict with the false teachers that erupted in the Church. Their ungodly teachings resulted in harmful disputes rather than faith building interpretations.²

In chapter four of Ephesians, Paul tells of God’s plan for faithful living. Christ endows and builds the Church and gives God’s pattern and principles for Church members. Ephesians 4:32 deals specifically with forgiveness.

DEFINITIONS:

Forgiveness Defined: Forgiveness is choosing to pardon, remit, or overlook the mistake, fault, offense, hurt or injury of the offender without demanding a penalty, punishment or retribution.³

Webster’s definition: to cease to feel resentment against an (offender): Pardon {one’s enemies} 2 a: to give up resentment of or claim to requital for {an insult} b: to grant relief from payment of {debt}, synonym, excuse.⁴

Forgive, charizomai, χαρίζομαι (khar-id’-zom-ahee) 5483; from 5485; *to show favor, give freely*: bestowed (1), forgave (2), forgive (3), forgiven (4), forgiving (2), freely give (1), gave (1), given (1), graciously forgave (1), granted (4), hand (2), things freely given (1).

Englishman's Concordance

Forgive, charizomai, χαρίζομαι, (khar-id’-zom-ahee), 5483, “to show a favor unconditionally”, is used of the act of “forgiveness,” whether divine, Ephesians 4:32; Col. 2:13, 3:13; or human, Luke 7:42, 43 (debt) 2 Corinthians 2:7, 10; 12:13; Eph. 4:32 (1st mention).⁵

2 MacArthur, John, The MacArthur Study Bible

3 Brown PhD, David L (Pastor), Forgiveness, Logos Resource Pages.org

4 Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

5 Vines Complete Expository Dictionary

Kind, chrestos, (*khrase-tos*) (5543) serviceable, good, pleasant” (of things), “good, gracious, kind” (of persons), is translated “kind” in Luke 6:35, of God: in Eph. 4:32, enjoined upon believers.⁶

Tenderhearted, eusplanchnos (yoo'-splanekh-nos) (2155), “compassionate, tenderhearted,” lit, “of good heartedness” (eu, “well,” and splanchnon), is translated “tenderhearted” in Ephesians 4:32.⁷

LESSON INTRODUCTION:

The word of God is replete with exhortations to forgive. It is taught in the Gospels (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:35; Mark 11:25. Jesus referenced it in the Model Prayer; “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Subsequently, He became the supreme example of forgiveness. God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, hung on a cross, bled, suffered, and died in our place to forgive us of our sins. Though He had never sinned, He took on Himself the penalty for our sins. He forgave us and He asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him. *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7)*. Since Christ has done this, as believers who have received God’s forgiveness, we are compelled to forgive one another.

The scriptural passage in Ephesians 4:32 is the first mention⁸ of “forgive one another” relative to Christians in the church. The law of first mention in a passage indicates that we will find out what God originally intended and communicated concerning that idea. The lesson to follow is to shed light on what Paul meant.

LESSON CONTENT (Input and Modeling):

OUTLINE:

I. God’s Standard For Forgiveness

Scriptures: Luke 23:34, Matthew 6:12, 14-15 and Roman 5:8

It is God who initiated his relationship with us as believers. In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden when Adam sinned, God had already made a provision through his Son Jesus Christ to reconcile us back to Him. Jesus sacrificial death on the cross was sufficient for God to forgive us of all of our sins. Romans 5:8 states “But God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.

God forgives us in Christ and mandates us to forgive others. When we forgive one another, God grants us a renewed strength and inner peace that passes all

⁶ Vines Complete Expository Dictionary

⁷ Vines Complete Expository Dictionary

⁸ Vines Complete Expository Dictionary

understanding. Christ sets the standard and we must strive to be like him. He is our perfect example.

Even while Christ was being crucified on the cross, he cried out “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The Lord’s Prayer states, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors (Matthew 6: 12). When we forgive others of their sins or trespasses, God also forgives us; but when we do not forgive others of their sins and trespasses, God will not forgive us of our sins and trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15). This does not indicate that God withholds the justification from believers that are in Christ. We are still pardoned from the penalty and guilt of sin. Christ only admonishes and chastens to encourage us to forgive.

As believers seeing love, kindness, tenderheartedness, compassion and forgiveness revealed by God through His Son Jesus Christ, we should reciprocate these virtues and receive the new freedom through the act of forgiveness. Then and only then, can we be one with Christ as He is one with the Father. What spiritual growth the church could experience if she were a unified body forgiving and loving one another!

II. Choosing to Forgive

Scriptures: Matthew 18:21-35, I Peter 4:8, Colossians 3:12-13

Christians should be willing to forgive one another because we are new creatures in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We now should exhibit CHRIST-like behavior.

In light of the countless times that God has repeatedly forgiven us through his love and mercy, how can we not forgive others of their offences against us? When we refuse to forgive others it grieves God and He will punish his unforgiving children. [Matthew 18:21-35]

Exactly how do you go about forgiving one another? After all, you say, “I am the one that was wronged. There was an offense committed against me”. Perhaps, someone lied on you, slandered your name, stole from you, betrayed you, treated you coldly, snubbed you, excluded you, cheated on you, stirred up strife in the church about you, or physically hurt you in some way. The list can go on. Moreover, there are lingering emotional overlays that you may deal with almost daily. You feel the disappointment, hurt, pain, anger, resentment, or bitterness. As a result, you are in bondage and unable to shake yourself free from the residual emotions. You wrestle with it day and night. You are tormented. Anything can trigger these emotions, something someone says, seeing the person, or a particular place or situation. You are held captive. How do you break free?

Perhaps, you are the offender who needs forgiveness from the victim. You are held captive, because of the guilt from the wrong committed. Pride can get in the

way in both instances. Yet, in either case you are compelled to forgive, because ‘this is your brother’.

Forgiveness is difficult. First, it begins as decision to do it. Choose to forgive. This decision arises out of your love for Christ and to be in compliance with His Word. It is supported in the fourth chapter of Ephesians by a desire to preserve unity in the body of Christ (the Church), to keep unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We are compelled to forgive, because ‘this is my brother’.

True forgiveness cannot be done in your own strength. One must make a conscious effort to do it seeking help from the Lord. Be mindful that a desire to forgive, the majority of the time, is a struggle, because the emotionality still surfaces. Do not allow the enemy to rehearse the situation over and over in your mind and emotions. Shut it down!!!

One meaning of the word, **Forgive**, charizomai, (**khar-id'-zom-ahce**), in the Greek means, “to show a favor unconditionally”. We show those who have wronged us unconditional favor when we release them from the bondage of the penalty for the wrong done to us. Only the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit can enable us to do this!

To forgive, one needs to earnestly seek God through prayer. It begins on our knees, humbling ourselves before God and relinquishing the right to get even or seek vengeance. “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.” You may need to confess your sins for harboring anger, gossiping about the person, or making efforts to retaliate. God says to pray for those who spitefully use and persecute you. [Matthew 5:44] There is a powerful release of burdens that comes from this act over a period of time!

Another step is to ask the Lord to take the hard feelings and fill you with His peace and His love, instead. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you with the strength and courage to forgive. You will need strength to face and treat the person, as God would have it according to His Word.

Love, tenderheartedness, and compassion should accompany forgiveness. I Peter 4:8 states that “love covers a multitude of sins”. As believers, we should exemplify the kind of love that places another’s spiritual well being ahead of our own, even if it means being mistreated.

Colossians 3:13 tells us, “forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye!” Forbear is from the Greek word (anecho), meaning “to hold”, “to bear with”, “and endure”. If a person has hurt or wounded us, to show forth Christ-likeness we need to bear with it and tolerate it.

Read the Word of God to bring comfort and strength to you. The Word will encourage you when it seems that no progress is being made. You will need His help to lay aside pride and to take on humility.

Ask God for the exact Words to say to that individual to break the ice and for words that express forgiveness. Suddenly one day, you may find the weight of the resentment and ill feelings gone, because God's love and peace has overtaken you as a result of the prayers and reading God's Word.

God chose us through His love and sovereign grace, and He expects us to have patience in forgiving one another. This reveals the character of God that is manifested by longsuffering within the new man. Colossians 3:12 states "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy, and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering.

Continue to treat that person with kindness, gentleness, or tenderheartedness, whether it is reciprocated or not. Be comforted in knowing that you stepped out in obedience to God's Word. Proverbs 16:7 says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Trust God to do the rest.

When we choose to forgive and release the anger, bitterness and hurt within, God will then bring healing in our lives. Our strength will be renewed and we will become bolder witnesses for Him. Let us bring honor and glory to OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST by practicing the sacrificial act of forgiveness.

SUMMARY/REVIEW/CLOSURE:

Jesus modeled forgiveness as He felt the most excruciating physical and emotional anguish during His passion on the cross. In God's infinite wisdom, He knew that we needed to see Jesus forgiving those who far exceeded the offenses we are expected to forgive. The magnitude of Jesus' forgiveness secured our right to eternal life.

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for every one and there's a cross for me!"

Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer to ask God to forgive us *as* we forgive others. God does not need your forgiveness to forgive people who offended you. Scripture teaches us that God relates your forgiveness of others to the forgiveness you seek for your sins that offend Him. God gives us numerous chances throughout our lives to personally experience what it is like to forgive others. This enables us to appreciate His forgiveness for our sins. To forgive is to value what God has done in forgiving you. If we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven.

Do not expect true forgiveness to be an easy experience. It may be the hardest thing you have ever had to do. Pray for God to help you fulfill His will for you. Look to Christ each time you are offended and find strength through His suffering and death to *forgive one another*.

DISCUSSION/APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the relationship of the words redemption, iniquity and transgressions as it relates to true forgiveness.
2. What is the difference between true forgiveness and forgiveness?
3. What do you hope this study of true forgiveness will teach you about your own walk with God?
4. What might be some implications from this lesson on forgiveness in relation to your church involvement, family life and friendships?

ASSESSMENT/GUIDED or INDEPENDENT PRACTICE:

Reflect on this lesson using discussions from your group, your own personal readings and insight to respond to the scenario below:

In many ways the church is like an orchestra. We are a diverse body meant to produce the beautiful sound of the gospel. Too often, however, we are out of tune with each other, sounding more like an orchestra that never took the time to tune up. Do you need to do some tuning up? Is there someone with whom you need to sit down for a talk, either asking for forgiveness or being honest about how he or she hurt you?

Based on the fact that God's Word and His eternal purpose places high premium on unity, what should be your goal in approaching this person?⁹

Knowing that reconciliation is your goal, how will you talk to this person? What will your tone of voice be? What will you say? What will you try to achieve?

⁹ Swindol, Charles R., *Becoming a People of Grace*

PRAYER:

TEACHING MATERIALS:

Bookmarks displaying Seven Steps to Forgiveness for the participants are on the following page. They can be produced on cardstock paper as keepsake reminders.

“Seven Steps to Forgiveness”

“And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Step 1

Choose to forgive!

It is an act of will—you must decide to obey God’s command to forgive. (Matt. 18: 21-35).

Step 2

Pray for the strength

You need God’s help to forgive even through your hurt and pain. God is able to strengthen your resolve! (Phil. 4: 13).

Step 3

Pray for the other person

You may need to confess to God that you are holding on to anger, gossiping about them, or trying to retaliate. (Matt. 5:44).

Step 4

Release the hurt and rely on God!

Ask God to help you release the painful feelings, anger, hatred, and bitterness and replace it with his love. Rely on God’s Word for comfort. (I Pet. 4:8)

Step 5

Be reconciled with the person.

Ask God to help you express to the person your hurt and forgiveness **OR** ask the person for forgiveness with a humble and sincere spirit. (Col. 3:12)

Step 6

Show favor towards the person.

Treat the person with kindness even if they don’t reciprocate. You’re doing so in obedience to God’s word. (Proverbs. 16:7)

Step 7

Know you are obeying God!

The love of God is shown in your forgiveness; so the Holy Spirit is transforming you through your obedience to God’s command to love and forgive. (I John 4: 10-11).

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