

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

Forgiving One Another - Part Two: “Choosing to Forgive”

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 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]

OBJECTIVE: Demonstrate and apply true forgiveness in daily Christian relationships.

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?¹ Could it be that forgiving the individual would bring harmony in the relationship?

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.

It is so easy for us to hold on to anger and grudges because someone has hurt or offended us in some way. Many people walk around robbed of peace and joy because of bitterness and resentments against others from years past. Seeking revenge seems to be a quick remedy for the seething inward pain. Yet, God says there is another way to handle the problem. The better way is forgiveness. It will not happen unless a decision is made to do it! In spite of the feelings we carry, we must choose to forgive. Forgiving does not mean forgetting it or excusing the harm or the wrong done to you.

Choosing to Forgive

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

¹ Swindol, Charles R., *Becoming a People of Grace, An Exposition of Ephesians*. June 2001.

What is the need?

- Many people are living in bondage because of an offense done to them by another person.
- Forgiveness can heal hurts and transform relationships
- The church may not be benefiting from the full potential of its members because of tense relationships.
- Some individuals are suffering from health issues as a result of unforgiveness. (Blood pressure & heart issues)²

The Dilemma:

The desire to forgive means overriding natural human responses of anger, resentment, and vengeance.

Realize You Must Decide to forgive!

It is an act of will—you must decide to obey God’s command to forgive. (Matt. 18: 21-35). (Eph. 4:32) 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.

“Generally, forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. The act that hurt you or offended you may always remain a part of your life, but forgiveness can lessen its grip on you and help you focus on other, positive parts of your life. Forgiveness can even lead to feelings of understanding, empathy and compassion for the one who hurt you.” [Mayo Clinic Article accessed online 12-12-17 @ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/forgiveness/art-20047692>]

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] Scripture informs us that forgiving puts us in right relationship with God and one another. (Matt. 6:15)

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, demeaned your character, 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 may be lingering some emotional overlays that you deal with almost daily. You feel the disappointment, hurt, pain, anger, resentment, or bitterness. As a result, you find yourself in bondage, 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.

² Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/forgiveness art-20047692>

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 the need 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. You 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-ahee**), 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, telling others what a terrible person you think they are, or making efforts to retaliate. God says to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute you. [Matthew 5:44] You will find that 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 of 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.

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*.

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.

“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).