

A Godly Heart Forgives #4

Text : **Matt. 18: 15-20 ; Rom. 12: 14-21**

S#1.

A. This is the forth lesson in our series on the subject of forgiveness.

1. We are learning that forgiving others is often difficult because it's against nature.
2. We've seen that many misconceptions cloud our understanding of forgiveness.

S#2.

B. Our understanding is growing as we learn more. We have come to understand :

1. Forgiveness is a grace that is both received and given without measure.
2. Because God gives this grace to us beyond measure, He expects us to forgive others.
3. It's hard to forgive from the heart because it comes from the heart of God, not man.
4. We must change our "nature" before we can forgive others; truly value others.
5. Misconceptions about forgiveness make it seem harder than it is.
 - a. We can forgive though we remember the offense and still hurt from it.
 - b. We don't have to have warm and fuzzy feelings toward the offender or be buddies.
 - c. We don't have to stop disapproving of an action in order to forgive it. (**murder**)

6. Forgiving is :

S#3.

- a. To release the offender from his debt to you.
 - b. It is to extend mercy as opposed to demanding justice.
 - c. Forgiveness is given as grace .. not earned .. not deserved.
7. To forgive "**from the heart**" one must be motivated by love.
- a. Only love overcomes self-interest in favor of another.
 - b. **I Pet. 4: 8** "love covers a multitude of sins"
 - c. **I Cor. 13: 5** "**is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,**"

S#4.

S#5.

C. Most importantly we have observed that forgiveness is essential to salvation. S#6.

1. We are commanded to forgive others **as** we have been forgiven. (**God 4gvs ...**)
2. We have learned that our personal forgiveness depends upon our forgiving others.
**Matt. 6: 15 – But if you do not forgive others, then
 your Father will not forgive your transgressions.**
3. If our sins are not forgiven we cannot be saved. **Thus ...** we must forgive.

With this lesson we will look at some practical considerations involved in forgiving others.

S#7.

I. The onus is on the offended Christian to seek a resolution to an offense.**S#8.****A. The offended party must approach the offending brother.****S#9.**

1. **Matt. 18: 15** – If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.
2. We do not have the right to set and feel wounded by someone; We MUST go to them.
 - a. *“That’s embarrassing ! They did wrong; they should have to come to us.”*
 - b. He may not realize that he has done wrong.
3. Love demands that we be our brother’s keeper.
 - a. **Gal. 6: 1** – Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.
 - b. We don’t have the option **not** to be involved in the lives of the brethren.

S#10.**B. There is urgency in the command.****S#11.**

1. **Matt. 5: 23-25** Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. **25** “Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, ...
2. Strife will interfere with our ability to worship. **S#12.**
 - a. We assemble three times each week for worship, must resolve before then .
 - b. Every day we worship individually in our homes.
 - c. Discord hinders prayer.

I Pet. 3: 7 – You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
3. If you are upset by the offense, deal with it straight away. **S#13.**
 - a. **Eph. 4: 26-27** Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and do not give the devil and opportunity.
 - b. Command : Deal with the anger the same day it occurs.
 - c. Command : Do not give the devil and opportunity.

** The devil is skilled at molding hurt feelings into hatred.*
4. **Remember** : Forgiveness is for YOUR benefit, not for the offender’s benefit.

C. Proactive conflict resolution is a tenant of Christianity.**S#14.**

1. Those who actively promote peace are of the same character as God.
Matt. 5:9 – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
2. Christians are specifically commanded to “**pursue peace.**”
Heb. 12: 14 – Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.
3. The Christian is charged with taking the initiative in pursuing peace. **S#15.**
 - a. **Rom. 12: 17-18** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.
 - b. We must never be the cause of discord or contribute to it.

D. Thus, the first step in forgiveness is initiating a dialogue about it.**S#16.**

1. Pray and meditate before going to confront an offending brother.
 2. Never confront an offender while angry, tired, or hungry. (*objective is restoration*)
 3. Plan every word you will say; write it down; and practice saying it. (*use notes*)
- * **Be loving and diplomatic because souls may be at stake.**

II. Do not make forgiveness dependant on how you feel.**S#17.****A. Forgiveness is a moral decision, not an emotional response.****S#18.**

1. **Eph. 4: 31-32** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
2. The putting away of bitterness, wrath and malice is the first step in forgiveness.
 - a. These negative feelings come in uninvited. (*They're produced by the flesh.*)
 - b. They must be actively “**put away**” because they don’t just leave.
 - c. If not fully purged, they will just hide in the id.

B. There is a rational thought process that goes into forgiving, not wait for it.**S#19.**

1. First one must emotionally deal with the wrong that was done to you.
 - a. Determine if a wrong was indeed committed against you.
 - b. If you were wronged accept that you are justifiably hurt.
 - c. Though you’re right to feel the hurt, you may choose to release it. (*not nurse it*)

2. Prayerfully try to assess why the offender hurt you. (*Are you too sensitive ?*)

- a. Is he even aware that he committed the offense?
- b. Is he seeking revenge for a perceived offense you have committed?
- c. Is he jealous, resentful or motivated by other character issues?

* **Understanding does not imply control of the offender's motives.** S#20.
Concentrate on what you can control ... your emotions and reactions.
Understanding helps you control you so you can purge your negative feelings.

3. Remember that the actions of each individual reflects his own heart and no other.

- a. The offender's actions flowed from his/her heart.
- b. You must not react to him, but act based upon your own character.
- c. The one who angers you controls you.

4. Our goal ... consciously and prayerfully turn it all over to God. S#21.

- a. This constitutes the moral decision to forgive.
- b. **Rom. 12: 19** – **Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord.**

S#22.

C. **The decision to forgive doesn't require a feeling of affection toward the offender.**

- 1. You must forgive a drunk that ran over your child, but you'll never have closeness.
- 2. If you wait to stop hurting, you will never forgive him.
- 3. You can release the desire for justice / revenge and trust God to deal with it without desiring a relationship.

Remember : The giving of forgiveness is for YOUR benefit, not for the offender. S#23.

- a. When you have forgiven him, you are right before God.
- b. Once forgiven by you the offender must still get right with God.

III. The greater challenge is to forgive "from the heart." (*truly release*) S#24.

A. Gandhi is reported to have said,

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

- 1. Though Gandhi was not a man of God he was correct in this statement.
- 2. The strength to truly forgive is the fruit of faith in God.

3. The Apostles knew this so they responded to Jesus' teaching by saying : S#25.

Luke 17: 4-5 **"And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."** 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

4. **Rom 12: 19** ... All vengeance belong to God, **trust Him** to administer justice.
5. You NEED to suffer offenses to develop your faith. **S#26.**
 - a. **Heb 5: 8** – ...He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.
 - b. **Jas 1: 3** – knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

B. Have realistic expectations.

S#27.

1. Of others :
 - a. Expect that people will have shortcomings from time to time.
 - b. Anticipate that there will be repeat offenses.
 - c. Remember the good experiences you shared.
2. Of yourself :
 - a. Realize that your forgiveness may not start off perfect.
 - b. You will have lapses and have to suppress memories that come back.
 - c. You will have time when you forgive without reconciling straight off.

C. Refuse to accept the role of victim.

S#28.

1. Do not allow your life to be controlled by or defined by the hurt.
2. Every time you think of the offender consciously call up some pleasant memory.
3. Every time you remember the hurt, remember how magnanimously you forgave.

D. Work to overcome evil with good.

S#29.

1. Remember our text :

Rom. 12: 20-21 “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and, if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
2. Lady baked cakes for a spiteful neighbor ... “*Coal of fire, coals of fire.*” **S#30.**
3. **Luke 6: 28** ... Pray for the offender to be blessed and drawn close to God.

E. Live in the presence, without feeding off the past.

S#31.

1. Good or bad, the past cannot be altered.
 2. “*Give up all hope of a better past.*”
 3. Use the present to prepare a better future.
 4. Don’t let resentment and bitterness rob you of your enjoyment of the present.
- * *There is a reason God put both eyes in the front of your head.*

CONCLUSION :**A. For the Christian, working toward developing a forgiving heart is ongoing. S#32.**

1. We must realize that forgiving stems from the nature of God, not of man.
2. To deepen our understanding of forgiveness, we must learn more about God.
3. We learn about God through what he has revealed about Himself.

B. We must actively take steps to develop a forgiving heart. S#33.

1. Being against man's nature, it won't just happen.
2. One commits to do it and then takes active steps to accomplish it. (*Goal vs Dream*)
 - a. Read about it and meditate on it.
 - b. Pray about becoming a more forgiving person.
 - c. Associate with forgiving people.
3. The Christian must learn to feel comfortable talking about forgiveness.
 - a. Talk with fellow Christians about it to become comfortable with the vocabulary.
 - b. Practice the language of forgiveness by teaching children and grandchildren about asking for and giving forgiveness.

*** Many people don't know how to ask God for forgiveness because they were not taught to ask others to forgive them. (*I'm sorry is not asking 4gy*)**

S#35.**C. The key to being a forgiving person is develop the proper attitude toward others.**

1. Love is the Rosetta Stone by which the Christian must interpret the world.
 - a. "Love covers a multitude of sins."
 - b. "Love is not provoked" and "keeps no record of wrongs"
2. As God looks at us we must look at others.
 - a. Compassion and pity
 - b. Looking for a way to rescue rather than a way to condemn. (*John 3: 17*)

D. What if they don't want our forgiveness ?

1. Must we forgive them anyway ?
2. Our next lesson will seek to answer this question.

INVITATION :**S#36.**

The best way to learn to forgive others is to personally experience God's forgiveness.

Lesson Text :**Matthew 18: 15-20**

15 If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. **16** But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact can be confirmed. **17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. **18** Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

19 “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. **20** For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”

Rom. 12: 14-21

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **16** Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. **17** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. **20** “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and, if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.