

Walking in Forgiveness

1. The **POWER** of forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

a) Our immense un-payable debt of sin has been forgiven **BY GRACE**

Ex 25:17-22 And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony <law> that I shall give you. There I will meet with you... above the mercy seat

Psalms 103:11 As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

“God has moved us from the level of law up to the level of grace” John Arnott

b) Jesus deals with the sin and the cause of the sin

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“He more than forgives us. He turns our liabilities to assets and self made hells into heavens. No matter how badly we mess up if we turn the mess and the messer over to him he unmesses the messer and makes an asset out of the mess” Rufus Moseley

c) when sickness is rooted in sin it is also dealt with

(note: not all sickness is a result of sin - see John 9:2)

Matt. 9:2 he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”

We may need to seek forgiveness from others and reconcile with others but fundamentally we can know right now “I am forgiven by God”!!

2. The **EXTENT** of forgiveness

Forgiveness is not;

Letting time pass

Being a door-mat or enabling an abuser

Dependant on feelings (but it does involve feelings)

Minimising (“the offence was not that bad”)

Excusing (“the offender wasn’t to blame”)

Forgiveness is **tied to our willingness to forgive** others (Matt 18:35)

Forgiveness is **not to be surface level but from the heart** (Matt 18:35)

Forgiveness is to **extend repeatedly** – it's not optional (Matt 18:21)

Forgiveness must extend until we can **truly love and bless those** who have wronged us “forgiveness = to cut/release”

Forgiveness is **not the same as reconciliation**.

Reconciliation is restoring the relationship and requires repentance and change from the offender. Forgiveness does not.

If we do not forgive we **deliver ourselves over to torment** (Matt 18:34).

When we refuse to forgive we move ourselves back to the level of law

Our forgiveness **must extend to ourselves**

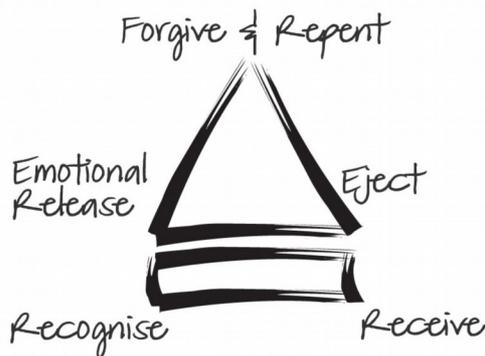
Matt 22:39 “love your neighbour as yourself”: If you don't love yourself then God help your neighbour” Peter Jackson

3. The **PROCESS** of forgiveness

So, the Holy Spirit has convicted me that I have not forgiven someone ‘from the heart’; what should I do?

Matt. 18:34 “if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

A simple process: **REFER**



Stage	Example
Recognise the offence. Do not minimise or excuse.	Father I recognise that my dad sinned against me when he didn't ever say that he loved me. Even though he had been brought up badly, it was still wrong.
Emotional release. Express your feelings to the person as if they were standing there in front of	Dad. You didn't ever show me any affection. You never told me you loved me. Why? How hard is it to say? I'm still dealing with it 30

you. If it helps, write them down first. Think about what effect their sin has had on you or others.	years later. I feel so alone. Just a hug would have done wonders – you never even touched me.
Forgive & Repent: Forgive them for this sin. Picture Jesus in front of you and hand the debt over to Him.	Dad. I forgive you for never telling me you loved me. I release you and Jesus I give the debt to you Father forgive me for withdrawing from my dad emotionally.
Eject the lies, judgement, hostility & desire for revenge	Father I lay down the right to judge, condemn or get revenge. I won't freeze Dad out any more or punish him with silence.
Receive the truth & fresh filling of the Spirit. Speak the truth to yourself to replace the lies. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his life. Bless the person and ask that God will forgive them	<name>, you are not unloved. You are loved by God. You are precious to Him. Dad I bless you. Father I ask that you forgive my Dad.

4. The TRUTH of forgiveness

Lie	Truth	To do
The offence was too great – the pain is too deep	God can heal the wound	Work on learning to trust God and the power of the cross
I should withhold forgiveness until they ask for forgiveness – or they'll do it again	Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing.	Learn to release and transfer the debt to God
Forgiving someone will make me look/feel weak	The desire to look strong and superior is pride. Pride will keep you in bondage	Confess and repent of your pride
It's too easy for them and unfair on me.	Just as it was easy for you to be forgiven by Jesus but costly for him. Do you really want fair?	Put them into the hands of God and trust Him with the outcome
If I forgive then I'm acting like a hypocrite because I don't feel forgiveness	I'm a hypocrite if I don't forgive because my real nature as a child of God is a forgiver like my Father	Learn about your new identity in Christ (Eph 4:24-25)
I can't forgive because I will never be able to forget	I may not forget the wrong but I will no longer remember the 'sting'	Give up the right to keep replaying the hurtful event. Trust God with your future
God has wronged me – I need to forgive him	God cannot do wrong. You can express your	Learn to focus not on what God hasn't done

	feelings of pain though (eg Psalm 22) but try to end in a good place of giving praise and expressing trust in Him.	but on what he has done. You possibly need to also repent of self pity.
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Notes:

- a) For some people who have sinned against you extensively you will have to repeat this process as the Holy Spirit brings other things back to memory that you have not forgiven 'from the heart'
- b) Sometimes you will know that you also need to go to speak to the person to challenge their behaviour.
- c) When you are in a relationship with someone who repeatedly sins against you, you will have to learn to lay down healthy boundaries and possibly even withdraw from the relationship. You can still do this while loving and forgiving.

(adapted from Diane Spencer and Mary Jane Hall)

Questions for Group or Individual Study

1. What stands out to you most from Jesus' teaching on forgiveness in Matt 18?
2. What is the hardest thing for you about forgiveness?
3. What difference has it made to you that God has forgiven you?
4. What has walking in forgiveness looked like for you this year?
5. Is there anyone that the Holy Spirit is leading you to forgive?

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