

Forgiveness

I had just turned nine when I began asking those important questions about baptism. And I remember my father taking an entire Sunday afternoon to sit and teach me the basics of Christianity. As we studied together about the qualities of a Christian I can remember that he told me that even though none of the qualities were easy to master, the quality of forgiveness had always been the most difficult for him. When I asked him why he fussed with it so much if it was so difficult, he responded, "Because it is also the most rewarding." As I have gotten older I too have struggled with this thing called forgiveness. I mean we live in a world that is more comfortable with the concept of "An eye for an eye," than with "Turn the other cheek." This morning I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the importance of forgiveness in our lives.

In preparing for my lesson this morning I came across a story that I feel embraces the importance of forgiveness in the lives of not only the Christian, but the Non-Christian as well.

There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father. On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

This morning I would like us to look at the biblical measure of forgiveness, the benefits of forgiving others, and then look at just a few examples from the Bible that we can model from.

A. What is the Biblical measure of forgiveness?

1. Seventy times seven.

a. [Matthew 18:21-35](#)

2. As often as asked.

a. [Luke 17:3-4](#), "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

3. As God forgave us.

a. [Ephesians 4:32](#), "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you."

B. What are the benefits of forgiving?

1. It is necessary for our own forgiveness.

a. [Mark 11:25-26](#), "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

2. It restores Christian fellowship.

a. [2 Corinthians 2:5-10](#)

C. Examples of forgiveness from the Bible.

1. [Genesis 45:8-15](#) (Joseph)

2. Luke 15:11-32 (The Lost Son)

3. Luke 23:34 (Jesus) *"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"*

We have got to get to the point that we understand that our sins have separated us from our relationship with God, and without the forgiveness of Jesus, we have no hope of bridging the gap we have created because of our sins. On the same hand, we also must understand that if we will not forgive others when they sin against us then we have no forgiveness in heaven. I think that my dad had it right when he said that forgiveness is one of the most difficult and yet most rewarding of the Christian qualities.

A couple married for 15 years began having more than usual disagreements. They wanted to make their marriage work and agreed on an idea the wife had. For one month they planned to drop a slip in a "Fault" box. The boxes would provide a place to let the other know about daily irritations. The wife was diligent in her efforts and approach: "leaving the jelly top off the jar," "wet towels on the shower floor," "dirty socks not in hamper," on and on until the end of the month. After dinner, at the end of the month, they exchanged boxes. The husband reflected on what he had done wrong. Then the wife opened her box and began reading. They were all the same, the message on each slip was: "I love you, and I forgive you!" Their marriage was never the same.

Remember this scripture this week as you go about your daily activities. Colossians 3:1, *"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*