

God's Plan to Practice Forgiveness

Set the Stage

-Our greatest need in our world today is forgiveness.

-We discovered that Biblical forgiveness must cost you something.

- Forgiving is giving up completely the right to revenge or to seek repayment from the one who wronged you.

- When a wrong has been done someone must pay. Either the offender or the victim. In forgiveness, you as the victim pay the debt.

- Forgiveness is always very expensive.

- It is pride costly, emotionally costly.

- Forgiveness is a voluntary form of suffering.

-As we think about how to actually practice forgiveness, there are a lot of misconceptions around what true forgiveness is.

1. You hear “forgive and forget.”

- That's nearly impossible. So that can't be true biblical forgiveness.

- And if you ever bring it up after the fact you have not forgiven.

2. You hear “forgive only if they say sorry.”

- Not everyone will apologize so that can't be true biblical forgiveness.

- We are responsible for our actions not people's reactions so that can't be true biblical forgiveness.

3. You hear “Forgive as long as they don't keep doing it.”

- That is not how Jesus has forgiven us so that can't be true biblical forgiveness.

-What exactly is forgiveness and how do we extend it to others?

1. Especially those who have hurt us with no regret or remorse.
2. Those who don't say sorry.
3. Those who continue in the behavior.
4. When someone else's actions cause severe consequences in your own life.

Taking it Further

-Forgiving is not easy. I struggle to forgive but I want forgiveness when I need it.

-The only way to forgive like Jesus requires us to is to:

1. Experience the the forgiveness of Jesus through the Gospel. (Foundation of forgiveness)

- The essence of Christianity is love and forgiveness.
- The Gospel is all about forgiveness. Forgiveness of such a large amount of sin that we cannot begin to comprehend it.

2. Meditate on the love and forgiveness of God that you have received.

- The more we understand God's love and forgiveness and how undeserving we are of it, the more we will see the need to forgive others. And be able to forgive.

How do we practice biblical forgiveness? What is God's plan to practice forgiveness so we can forgive like Jesus wants us to forgive? ...

1. Pray for them.

-Read Luke 23:34

- "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."

- Jesus prays and pleads for the forgiveness of his murderers.

-There is **no limit** to what is forgiven.

-Instead of screaming at them, He pleads with God for them.

-If Jesus treats his **murderers** like this then how can you and I be harsh to those who have harmed us?

-Prayer prepares our heart to forgive.

-Jesus prayed for his offenders.

-Pray that God would forgive them and show you if you have a part.

-Pray that God will help you forgive them.

-Pray for God to work in their heart.

-Jesus required forgiveness in His model prayer:

-*“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...**For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Mt. 6:11-15

-Prayer accomplishes what we are not able to:

-Prayer softens your heart.

-Prayer seeks the will of God.

-Prayer seeks the best for that person.

-Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies. (Mt. 5:44)

2. Forgive them

-We are command to forgive them.

-*“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as **Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**”* Col. 3:13

*-“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted,
forgiving one another, even as God for
Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” Eph. 4:32*

-Forgiveness is not based on their response or lack of response.

-Forgive no matter their response to you.

-We are not responsible for people's reaction but we
are responsible for our actions.

-Forgiveness is not so much for them as it is for us.

-There are 2 dimensions to forgiveness:

1. Inward

2. Outward

1. Forgiveness is first an **internal act**.

-Jesus says we are to forgive first from our heart.

-Forgiveness is not a **feeling**, it is a **choice** we make.

-It is an **act of obedience to God**.

-If you are waiting until you feel like you can forgive you
probably won't forgive.

-Forgiveness is typically **granted** before it is **felt**.

-Just because you have forgiven does not mean all your
hurt and angry feelings will go away.

-Doesn't mean the circumstances will go away.

-You will have to work through your feelings and emotions.

-Forgiveness is a **promise** not to make the person pay the debt
they owe.

-When we say, "I forgive you" we are promising to forgive
the debt and promising not to retaliate.

-It is a promise **not** to retaliate, to make them earn their forgiveness, promise not to make them beg, or hold it over their head.

-Every time we are tempted to do so we must pay the cost again.

-Because forgiveness is so expensive it will continue to cost you something.

-Done multiple times depending on the offense.

-Forgiveness is a form of suffering so it is a continual dying to self.

-As we are never more like Jesus than when we suffer, we are never more like Jesus when we have to forgive.

-You many say... **The cost is too high.**

-You have no idea what they have done, what they keep doing.

-Forgiving is not always easy.

-It hurts, it costs, it is suffering.

-When we are to forgive it is always the other person's fault. Their actions cost us.

-The cost is higher for you not to forgive.

1. Not to forgive puts us in the place of God. We place ourselves in the role of the judge.

-We decide if and when the person receives forgiveness.

-We decide what the person must do to be forgiven.

-We require justice and don't give mercy.

-When we do not forgive we are judging other people. The Bible says to "Judge not that ye be not judged."

2. Not to forgive is to give the offender power over us.
 - We will not do things because they might like it or will do things because they won't like it.
 - We Will not go or do because of the memory or emotions it provokes.
3. Not to forgive is to put yourself in a prison.
 - A self inflicted prison that will destroy your life.
 - It will cause you to get **bitter, angry, and not trust other people.**
 - It will cause you to put **walls up**. Push people away. It will destroy current or future relationships.
 - Unforgiveness runs deep into so many areas of our lives.
 - Need to forgive God, yourself, others.

3. Don't avoid the them.

-Read Matthew 18:15-17

- "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

- We are not to avoid the person or the situation.
- There is a biblical approach to forgiveness.
- Forgiveness occurs within community.**

-Forgiveness is not pretending you were not hurt.
-It's not forgetting it.

-Walking around like nothing ever happened while you are bothered or boiling inside is not forgiveness.

-The second dimension of forgiveness is outward.

-Biblical forgiveness calls us to **inner forgiveness** and **outward correction**.

-Inner forgiveness first and outward correction next.

-We speak the truth in love to try to correct the situation.

-We communicate to not repeat the same mistake.

-If it is a dangerous or life threatening situation you must forgive but you do not have to place yourself into another dangerous situation.

-You may need to go to others for help.

-There is a big difference between seeking outward correction and constantly hanging it over someone's head.

-Forgiving is not bring it back up all the time.

-Forgiving is not making them feel small.

-Forgiving is not manipulating or trying to control them because of what they did.

-Where does justice come into play?

-Too often we focus on the outward correction first.
God is the judge. We have to trust it to Him.

-Forgiveness and justice are not enemies.

-Forgiveness is not relieving the person of their responsibility.

-There are consequences to actions. Forgiveness does not always take these away.

-If you murder someone, the family can forgive you but you still have to go to prison.

-David had an affair with Bathsheba and was forgiven, but there were still severe consequences to his actions.

4. Pursue reconciliation and restitution with them.

-Read Luke 17:3-5

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”

-Jesus tells us to rebuke a wrong doer and if they repent we must forgive them as many times as they repent.

-There is **no limit** to forgiveness.

-Read Mark 11:25

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

-Jesus tells us to forgive regardless if they say sorry or repent.

-There is **no prerequisite** for forgiveness.

-Real forgiveness always strives for complete restoration of the offender and the relationship.

-That is the goal!

-The goal of the Gospel - forgive the offender and restore the relationship back. (God and us)

-Unfortunately, this goal is not always able to be achieved.

-This can make forgiveness hard or extremely hard.

- You are only responsible for your actions. You cannot control people's reactions nor are you responsible for them.
- If reconciliation is not possible pray, forgive, pray, forgive.
(We are becoming like Jesus)
- If you are the one being forgiven you can't demand immediate restitution.
- Healing takes time depending on the depth of offense.
- Trust must be earned back.

5. Do everything in love.

- "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for **charity shall cover the multitude of sins.**"* 1 Peter 4:8
- The difference between the world and Christianity is **anger and justice** vs **love and forgiveness**.
- How we act/respond will determine how others respond.
 - Love **produces healing** while anger **produces division**.
 - Love **disarms** while anger **antagonizes**.
 - Love wins people over while anger makes us act just like the wrong doers.
- God has forgiven us, yet He is working on us everyday to be a better person, to be more Jesus Christ.
 - We are to forgive and help each others be a better person, to be more like Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

- Unless you are just perfect you are going to need forgiveness often.
- Because you need forgiveness you must extend forgiveness.

Invitation - Bow your heads & close your eyes

- If you need to extend forgiveness don't let your pride keep you from it.
- Don't let the bitterness and anger rule you any longer.
- You many be wondering why God seems so distant, why he is not working like he should, maybe its because of unforgiveness in your heart.

1. Start by praying
2. Get to where you can forgive.
 - Granted before it is felt.
 - A promise not to retaliate or make them pay.
 - A promise that you will incur the cost.
3. Don't avoid the situation.
4. Deal with it seeking full reconciliation.. Always the goal
 - If you can't continue praying for them &
5. Do everything in love. Always love, love, love.

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