

CITY OF THE LIVING GOD

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

22

SERIES

In dedication to all the soul-winners that need a Bible study on forgiveness from God and forgiveness to others.

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“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (Psa. 32:1-2).

Forgiveness is such a vital and fundamental teaching found in the Word of God. This teaching not only affects our own spiritual, physical, and mental being, but it leaves a lasting impact on others around us. Learning the importance and the scriptural concepts in regard to forgiveness is necessary to living a victorious and overcoming life.

Oftentimes Christians learn one of the aspects to reconciliation but lack the other aspects. Either they are great at forgiving themselves, but not others, or they are good at forgiving others but not themselves. Having learned both aspects prepares the believer for greatness and triumph.

GOD'S MERCY IS EVERLASTING

Psalms 136:1

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his mercy endures forever."

Psalms 136 has 26 verses within it and after every stanza, it is repeated with the phrase, "For his mercy endures forever." Anytime something is repeated within Scripture, it is the author's way of emphasizing a truth. In this case, it is telling us that with 100% of assurance that God's mercy extends to all that request it. The Bible is replete with verses that describe his forgiveness.

Isaiah 43:12

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

Psalms 103:12

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Ephesians 1:7-8

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

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."

GOD'S MERCY STARTS WITH OUR MERCY

While we know that God's mercy is always present for us when we ask for it, we oftentimes fail to remember that he expects us to follow in his footsteps. Because our God is merciful, we also are supposed to be merciful. We want justice, retribution, and judgment to happen to others, but we stand upon the Word that says that our God is full of mercy and grace. However, Scriptures are clear that for us to receive mercy from him, we must extend it to others. That is, if we are full of His Spirit, then the same fruit of the Spirit which includes love will reside in us (Gal. 5:22). By definition, love includes forgiveness.

1 Peter 4:8

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (ESV).

How does love cover a multitude of sins? It's plain and simple; it forgives those that have sinned against you. That's why when the disciples asked Jesus to show them how to pray, he spoke about such a fundamental truth of forgiveness. Forgiveness from God is dependent upon our forgiveness of others.

Matthew 6:14-15

"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."

Ephesians 4:32

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Consider the parable of the unmerciful servant. He has a huge financial debt that he was afraid that his master would make him pay. In this story it is referring to our debt as a symbol of our great offences and sins. Notice how quick the king is to give mercy and forgiveness.

Matthew 18:23-27

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt” (ESV).

1000 talents were equivalent to 160,000 years of wages. It’s an impossible debt to pay! Yet he forgave him that debt. That is our story of redemption. We had a huge debt that needed to be paid and it required God to forgive us our debt. He did so by taking on the form of a servant and dying on a cross for us. After the slander, false accusations, whippings, and torture, while hanging on the cross, he said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:24).

The second half of the parable of the unmerciful servant shows the same servant that was forgiven of a huge impossible-to-pay-debt. He refuses to forgive a friend of a much smaller debt owed to him. It was still a large debt (16 years of wages).

Matthew 18:28-35

“But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my

heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (ESV).

Without a doubt the concept is very clear; we cannot obtain forgiveness if we cannot forgive others from their offenses towards us.

BEING SET FREE

Unforgiveness is probably one of the most harsh and insidious feelings that we as humans can experience. The rehearsing and memories of the injustices and slander can incapacitate us to the point we lose direction in our lives and cease to be the people God called us to become. Oftentimes we can see unforgiveness in people that post sayings and statements of retribution, vengeance, self-defense, calling out the sins of others, or sometimes just referring to those “haters.”

It’s obvious to others that they just have not forgiven completely and have not let go of the past. It is difficult to live trapped in the past. We rehearse the attacks, the slander, the injustices and it becomes a prison for us. It’s torture, but we get a thrill to be stuck in that cell. The doors open but we refuse to leave the cell. Our minds are daily remembering the episodes, the hurts, the lies, etc. When the events are brought up, you can see the anger and hurt in their eyes as if it were just yesterday. They have never let it go. They are trapped in a prison cell. Their minds are controlled by the past.

The good news is that Jesus set us free from that cell. We no longer have to bear the torture of the past. Jesus paved the way out for us at the Cross.

HOW TO FORGIVE

Why is God so harsh to those that do not forgive? Because he made a way for us already at Calvary. If we refuse to forgive, then everything He did at the Cross is in vain. He does not want us to live in that self-

imposed prison. He has busted out the door of that cell for us and made a way out of that misery.

Jesus gives us the answer on how to forgive.

Matthew 6:12

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

It begins with us repeating the phrase in a prayer. It does not say to forgive them when you feel like forgiving. It starts with the mouth and then it reaches the heart. When forgiveness becomes a regular part of your prayer life, then it is so much easier to forgive someone outside of prayer. Some people have never learned the virtue of forgiveness. Once it becomes a regular part of your life, it is so life-changing!

The Process of Forgiveness

1. Start by praying for that person. Pray for their good. Ask God to help you love them as He loves them. It's hard to be quite as angry with someone who you are praying for on a consistent basis.
2. Ask God to help you. Come to a place where you desire to forgive the person who hurt you, then ask God to give you the strength to do so.
3. Don't give up. You may not feel very forgiving the first time you pray for them, or you may find that your thoughts drift back to anger or hurt. However, don't be discouraged. This is completely natural and can be part of the process. Think of it as building your “forgiveness muscle” – it takes time. Keep at it and, eventually, God will help you truly forgive those who have hurt you.

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