

Forgive One Another

Colossians 3:12-17

Introduction

Human sin is an act of disobedience and rebellion against the God who created us. Yet Romans 5:8 states that "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." While we were not pursuing Him, when we were not running after Him, when we weren't interested in paying our debt, He picked up the tab for the forgiveness of our sins! God offers forgiveness to us freely. Biblical forgiveness is therefore the decision by the offended one, through an act of the will, to release the offender from the debt. When we respond to God in repentance and receive the forgiveness He offers, we are reconciled to a new relationship with Him.

The challenge for Christians is that we are then called to model in our own lives this same forgiveness that God gave us. Colossians 3:13 states that we are to forgive "...just as the Lord forgave you" (see also Ephesians 4:32). We often refuse to grant forgiveness, because we want the offender to be held accountable for their wrong. Unforgiveness, however, has a way of holding us hostage instead. Anger, bitterness, and resentment bind the soul of the one who keeps an account of past wrongs. When a Christian does not release those who have hurt them, we forget the great forgiveness we have received, and the Holy Spirit, who resides in us, is grieved (Ephesians 4:30). Forgiveness is not approving a wrong or excusing an evil, nor does forgiveness necessarily imply the reconciliation of a relationship. Forgiveness is the choice a hurt or wronged individual makes to release their offender from the obligation or debt for a harm they have caused. Forgiveness simply means to let go. In letting go, we unexpectedly find freedom from the bondage of our own unforgiveness.

Getting Started

1. As Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus took the initiative to forgive even when the people who crucified Him stood by and watched Him die. *How has the knowledge of God's forgiveness impacted you? Why is God's act of releasing you from the debt you owe meaningful to you?*
2. Read the parallel passage to today's text in Ephesians 4:30-32. *How can our unforgiveness grieve the Holy Spirit?*

Let's Get Personal

1. *Have you struggled with unforgiveness? Describe the effect that unforgiveness has had on you.*
2. *Have you been able to forgive someone? How have you been freed by making that decision?*

Take the Next Step

1. *What does forgiveness look like? What are the practical decisions that must be made to actively and consciously release another person?*
2. *Who do you need to forgive? What steps will you take this week to release your offender?*

Renew Your Mind

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
Colossians 3:13
