

have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?" The unforgiving servant failed to show forgiveness to others, unlike the king, who showed great mercy to him. Jesus is saying in the parable that God wants His children to live and act like He does, being a forgiving person. God has called you to be a part of His family and share in His image. He wants you to demonstrate His divine nature and character by forgiving others, as He has forgiven. That is why He commanded us to forgive others and made it the basis for our being forgiven by Him. (Matthew 6:14,15)

To Release Others From Harm

In the parable, the king "...felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt." (verse 27) Later, in verse 33, the king says, "*Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave,...*" Jesus, through the parable, was teaching us the importance of showing mercy to those who have offended us so that they can be released from the guilt and condemnation of their crime. This is not to say that offering forgiveness ignores, belittles, or condones the crime committed. Often, offenders will pay some consequence for their offense, either through the courts of law or through circumstances that reveal their sin.

Though people have done you wrong by hurting you or someone you know, they are in need of mercy and of being released of the debt of their crime. When you forgive them, there will be an attitude change in you that will become evident to them. In turn, they will sense a release from their debt, which will give God an opportunity to touch their life. If they are a Christian, you will be helping to set a brother or sister free from a debt and encourage them in their spiritual growth. If they are not a Christian, God can use your act of forgiveness as an opportunity to show His love and kindness toward them.

It is also important to understand that the person who forgives takes the loss. The king in the parable accepted the loss of a debt owed him in forgiving the unforgiving servant. He expected the unforgiving servant to do the same for his fellow servant. If you will be a forgiving person, realize that it will cost you. Your forgiveness will make you absorb the loss and often receive no compensation for the offense. To forgive is to cancel the debt owed you by another person(s). This is the part that seems so unfair. But, trust your heavenly Father to restore your loss, realizing that He rewards those who obey His will.

To Set Yourself Free.

In the parable, Jesus makes a most challenging statement: "*And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.*" (verses 34-35) Is it possible that God would allow punishing circumstances and demonic torturers to afflict your life until you came to your spiritual senses and were willing to forgive someone who had offended you or someone you knew? This may seem so unlike your view of God and how God operates, but it is truth right from God's word. There are many Christians who are being eaten up and destroyed over unforgiveness which has turned into bitterness and hatred. There mind and emotions have been so affected by their unwillingness to forgive, that they are spiritually sick. Some have become physically ill as a result of unforgiveness. There are countless testimonies of God's people who have finally come to forgive and were set free from the mental, emotional, and physical sickness caused by unforgiveness. God wants you to be free from the harmful effects of unforgiveness. Do yourself a favor and forgive everyone who has offended you.

Forgiveness Is A Choice!

Feelings play a big part in causing Christians to doubt that they have truly forgiven someone. Whether those feelings come as a result of self-doubt or Satan's lies, feelings will often distort our understanding of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an act of your will, a choice. When you make the choice to trust God's word and forgive, you have forgiven! It is settled, a done deal. Stand firm on God's word continually and your feelings will eventually line-up with the truth of your forgiveness.

Forgiveness

KNOW THE TRUTH



"...AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE."

Pastor Lynn Kern

"And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, FORGIVING each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

The Importance of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the foundation of the Christian life. It is the principle through which God has extended His love to us in order that we can come to Him and continually be assured of His acceptance of us. It is the principle by which we can extend His love to others by dismissing their debt against us, as God did for us. *"And forgive us our debts(trespasses), as we also have forgiven our debtors (those who trespass against us)." (Matthew 6:12)* An understanding of forgiveness and experiencing the reality of forgiveness will set you free to live the Christian life to the fullest. Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

Jesus Teaches On Forgiveness

The most powerful teaching on forgiveness in the Bible is found in Jesus' parable of the Unforgiving Servant, found in Matthew 18: 23-35. Prayerfully, read this parable. *23) For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24) And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him \$10,000,000. 25) But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. 26) The servant therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' 27) And the lord of that servant felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28) But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred days wages (approximately \$10,000); and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' 29) So his fellow servant fell down and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30) He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what he owed. 31) So when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32) Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33) Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant, even as I had mercy on you?' 34) And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35) So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."*

God's Forgiveness Is Serious!

Forgiveness always deals with a crime, an offense, a sin against someone. It suggests that there is a serious debt to be paid, a punishment to be served. In the parable, verses 24,25, Jesus gives us a picture of the king being owed a awesome debt by the servant.

Not only was the servant guilty of this awesome debt, but he and his family deserved a most severe punishment - to be sold into slavery for life. That is a picture of you and I. Because of our rebellion and sin against God, over and over again, we have an awesome debt of sin counted against us and we are deserving of the most severe punishment - eternal death in Hell.

That's why God's forgiveness is serious. It was so serious that it required His Son's death and punishment to pay for our debt. In other words, our forgiveness cost God. God forgave us by taking our guilt and deserved punishment, placing it on His Son, and then bearing the cost. The law of God cries for justice against us, but Jesus died in our place, as our substitute. When the king in the parable, which is a picture of God, forgave the servant, the awesome debt was canceled and the king took the loss. That's what God did for us, for you!

Are You Serious About God's Forgiveness?

Do you believe and trust in the forgiveness God has offered you? It seems that there are many Christians who still doubt God's clear and strong offer of forgiveness. To some, their past sin was so absolutely evil that they question God's willingness to forgive them. Some, continually fall into sin and struggle with sinful habits which cause them to doubt God's willingness to forgive over and over again. Others, passively believe in God's forgiveness, but fail to receive it because they get hung-up on the notion that they must forgive themselves. Is it possible that you have not taken God's forgiveness, seriously?

The Truth Of God's Word

Read the following scriptures from God's word and use them as the truth on which to base God's forgiveness in your life. "Psalms 103:12; Isaiah 38:17; and Colossians 2:13b"

Receive Forgiveness By Faith

You must believe and trust in the truth of God's word - what it says about God's forgiveness through Christ's death for you. You are going to be tempted to doubt God's forgiveness because of Satan's lies and your own feelings. In Revelation 12:10, it speaks of Satan as the "...accuser of the brethren." This means that Satan will accuse us by

making us think that we are still shameful and guilty before God. He will attempt to convince us that God has not forgiven us. Also, feelings of unforgiveness will surface at times because we will be reminded of certain sins, either through our own thoughts or the lies of Satan. You must receive forgiveness by faith. There will often be a battle with doubts and lies from Satan, but it is by faith in who God is and what He has done through Christ's death that establishes the reality of forgiveness. You must, by faith, receive God's forgiveness and continue to hold on to that promise, no matter what you feel.

Forgiving Others. Have You Failed to Forgive Others?

Forgiving others for what they have done to you or to someone you love is a fundamental part of God's plan for you and essential to your spiritual growth. However, like many other Christians, you may struggle with forgiving someone and have put off dealing with it. You may have failed to forgive because of an ongoing situation in which a person(s) continues to act hurtful toward you or your loved one. You may fail to forgive because of the awfulness of the crime committed again you or your loved one. You may fail to forgive because of a sense of need for justice and punishment so as to make the person(s) pay for their crime. Or, you fail to forgive because you believe that the offending person(s) must first show sorrow and repent before receiving forgiveness.

Forgiveness Is Not Optional

Whatever the reason may be, failure to forgive others is both contrary to God's plan and spiritually harmful to those involved. Jesus said, *"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."* (Matthew 6:14,15) Forgiveness is mandatory! It is a command, not a suggestion. God has based His commitment to forgive us on our willingness to forgive others. You must forgive? Why is our forgiving others so important to God? Because unforgiveness is harmful to your spiritual life and hurtful to those in need of being forgiven. Let us return to the parable and discover three reasons why God wants you to forgive.

Why God Wants You To Forgive:

To Be Like Your Heavenly Father

In the parable, Jesus gives us a picture of His Father's desire for us, His children, to be like Him. The king, who represents God in the parable, condemns the unforgiving servant in verse 33 when he says, *"Should you not also*