

# FORGIVENESS

**Matthew 18:21-35**

(All scriptures from NASB 1995 unless otherwise noted)

## Two Things Are Clear

1. We cannot forgive until the sinner repents.  
**Luke 17:3-4**
2. If the sinner **does repent**, we must forgive him, or else we cannot receive forgiveness from God ourselves. **Matthew 6:14-15**

## WE ARE TO FORGIVE AS GOD HAS IN CHRIST FORGIVEN US.

*“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

**Ephesians 4:32**

## I. WE ARE TO FORGIVE AS GOD HAS IN CHRIST FORGIVEN US.

- A. Sin is a terrible burden for any to carry.
1. The magnitude of sin is seen in the result of sin.  
**Ezekiel 18:20; Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 6:23**
  2. Man cannot pay the debt of sin. cf. **Matthew 16:26**
  3. We need the blood of Christ. **Romans 3:23-26; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19**
    - a. Man's need is constant; The blood of Christ is always available. **1 John 1:8-9**

## I. WE ARE TO FORGIVE AS GOD HAS IN CHRIST FORGIVEN US.

- B. Is God's forgiveness unconditional?
1. Those outside of Christ who sin, must do something. **Acts 2:36-38, 40-41; Acts 9:6; Acts 16:30-34**
  2. Christians who sin, must do something.  
**1 John 1:6-10; Acts 8:20-24**
  3. God is willing to forgive, IF WE ARE WILLING TO MEET HIS CONDITIONS!
    - a. Discuss **Luke 23:33-34; cf. Matthew 23:37**
    - b. Discuss **Acts 7:59-60; cf. Acts 9, 22, 26**

## II. WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT:

1. Just ignoring those who wrong us.
2. Simply refusing to return evil for evil. **Romans 12:17-21; Hebrews 10:30.**
3. Ignoring sin.
4. Saying, “I’ll forgive – but I won’t forget.”
  - a. This is not the way Jesus forgives; when he forgives sin, he remembers it no more. **Hebrews 10:17**
  - b. We cannot forgive one, and then constantly remind him of the sin and hold it over him.
  - c. cf. “I’ll forgive you, but I won’t have anything to do with you in the future” mentality.
5. Putting the offender on probation.
  - a. Forgiveness must be from the heart. **Matthew 18:35**

### III. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- A. According to American Heritage Dictionary  
*"To excuse for a fault or an offense; pardon; To renounce anger or resentment against. To absolve from payment of (a debt as an example)."*

### III. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- B. According to Theological (Greek) Dictionary of NT: From two Greek words: **apo (from) hiemi (send)** *"to send away, to let go, give up a debt, to remit"*.
1. Old Testament example is a scapegoat (*carrying away*). **Leviticus 16:21; Isaiah 53:6.**
  2. A *"casting out"* – **Isaiah 38:17.**
  3. A *"starting over"* – **Philippians 3:13-14.**

### III. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- C. According to God's word (forgiveness is) being like God ...
1. God removes the notation from the record –  
*"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away ..."* **Acts 3:19**
  2. God forgets, putting out of memory –  
*"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."*  
**Hebrews 8:12** (Quoting from **Jeremiah 31:34**)

### III. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- D. Examples of true forgiveness:
1. The prodigal son's father – **Luke 15:20-24**
  2. Stephen forgave – **Acts 7:60; cf. Acts 9:1-6**
  3. Paul's willingness – **2 Timothy 4:16**
  4. The sinner in Corinth – **2 Corinthians 2:5-8**

### IV. WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

- A. **God commands it.**  
*"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions."*  
**Mark 11:25**
- B. **The example of Christ demands it.**  
*"But Jesus was saying, Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing ..."* **Luke 23:34a**

### IV. WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

- C. **We must forgive because we ourselves have been forgiven.** **Ephesians 4:32**  
 Forgiveness is an act of mercy, not justice. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy ..."* **Matthew 5:7; cf. James 2:13**
- D. **We must forgive in order that we may be forgiven.** **Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25**  
 God's estimate of an unforgiving spirit is found in **Matthew 18:23-35.**

#### IV. WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

- E. **Seeking peace requires it! Romans 14:19**
- F. **Love calls for it. cf. 1 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Peter 4:8**
- G. **The Golden Rule demands it. Matthew 7:12**
- H. **Forgiving others shows strength of character. Romans 12:17-21**

#### V. OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- A. Can the mind ever forget? Paul did not maintain a “hate list.” cf. **1 Corinthians 13:5** “... *does not take into account a wrong suffered* ...”
  - 1. We did when we were children.
  - 2. We do as parents with our children.
  - 3. We forget our own faults.
  - 4. God commands we do both – **Ephesians 4:32**
  - 5. Love demands we do both – **1 Corinthians 13:4-5**

#### V. OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- B. How often must I forgive? **Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4**
  - 1. Not a matter of arithmetic – but of love for my brother!
    - a. We must forgive, if need be, seven times in one day or “seventy times seven.” Not just 490 times, but as often as he repents, I must be willing to forgive.

#### V. OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- C. What if the offender does not ask for my forgiveness?
  - 1. Jesus on the cross. **Luke 23:34**  
Did this give them forgiveness?  
**Of course not – it was conditioned upon their repentance! Acts 2:36-38; 1 John 1:9**
  - 2. Do not be a hypocritical judge. **Romans 2:1-4**
  - 3. Do not be vindictive. **Romans 12:17**
  - 4. One who does not repent has no Godly sorrow for his sin. cf. **2 Corinthians 7:10**

#### V. OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- D. How should we forgive one another?
  - 1. “... *from the heart.*” **Matthew 18:35**. Fully and completely. The same as God in Christ forgives us.

*“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*

**Ephesians 4:32**

#### V. OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS:

- E. How do we learn and cultivate true forgiveness?
  - 1. Physically, to refuse can lead to health and stress problems.
  - 2. Spiritually, to refuse can cause malice, wrath, jealousy, and separate us from God.
  - 3. Remember how greatly God has forgiven us! – **Romans 5:6-9**
  - 4. Ask God to assist and help us.
  - 5. Practice by praying for the offender. – **Matthew 5:43-45**
  - 6. Develop an understanding heart – **Proverbs 8:5**.
  - 7. Cultivate compassion and mercy – **Matthew 5:7**.

WE ARE TO FORGIVE EACH OTHER  
JUST AS THE LORD HAS FORGIVEN US.

*“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 3:12-13*

**Conclusion**

*“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” **Matthew 6:14-15***

- Is my soul worth being lost because of the actions of another person???

**God's Plan of Salvation**

**HEAR THE WORD**

*James 1:21-22; Romans 10:17*

**BELIEVE IN JESUS**

*Romans 1:16; Hebrews 11:6*

**REPENT OF SINS**

*Acts 17:30-31; Luke 13:3*

**CONFESS HIS NAME**

*Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10*

**BE BAPTIZED FOR FORGIVENESS**

*Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16*

**REMAIN OBEDIENT**

*Hebrews 5:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58*