

Choose to Be Forgiving in Heart

Lesson #5

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

Introduction:

In "The Christian Leader," Don Ratzlaff retells a story Vernon Grounds came across in Ernest Gordon's Miracle on the River Kwai. The Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad, had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened. A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot . . . It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point. The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! . . . The incident had a profound effect. . . The men began to treat each other like brothers. When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors (and instead of attacking their captors) insisted: "No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness." Sacrificial love has transforming power.

Don Ratzlaff, "The Christian Leader".

Transitional Statement:

Church, forgiveness is the fertile ground that God uses to grow His kingdom. Bitterness anger and resentment tear down spiritual possibilities and binds our hearts in torment.

Lesson:

I. An unforgiving heart chains the soul.

- A. It seems to be the way of mankind to want things to be fair and equal
 - 1. When a wrong is done most of the time a balance is sought
 - 2. Payment must be made to equal things out.
- B. But Jesus steered us away from this thinking in Matthew 5:38-39

38 " You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' 39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. NASU

C. 2 Peter 2:19 says "...for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved."

II. Forgiveness channeled in the right way can accomplish much

A. In John chapter 8, The Scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus caught in adultery. They were testing Jesus according to the Law of Moses which demanded that she be stoned to death, Jesus could have done a number of things.

1. Agreed to her stoning
2. Scolded her
3. Degraded her with a ... "How could you"

B. But Jesus choose to forgive her

1. I can't help but to think her heart was truly changed as she walked away
2. And the scribes and the Pharisees in their thinking were humbled

III. Forgiveness begins with an understanding of how much we have been forgiven

A. Only when we have stood at the foot of the cross and realized that our sins put Jesus there and that while we were yet sinners ...even enemies of the Jesus (Romans 5:8-10), He gave up his very life for us.

B. If payment in full for our sins was demanded of us we could not have paid the bill.

C. It was only through the gracious, merciful giving heart of a savior that we can stand redeemed before God.

D. Only at this point can we let go of the need for justice and even scores

E. Psalms 31:1-2

*1 A Psalm of Complaint and of Praise.
For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.
2 Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;
Be to me a rock of strength,
A stronghold to save me.*

IV. Forgiveness comes from having a heart like Jesus

A Be honest

1. Admit when your hurt and angry....don't hold it in!
 - a. Think about the way our culture points the opposite way here.
2. When we repress our hurts
 - a. Resentment grows
 - b. Anger builds
 - c. And, Satan gets a foothold
3. Repressing or holding in our emotions is like a balloon inflated with air. You press in on one spot and it bulges out in another.
4. The quicker we acknowledge hurt or anger the sooner we can move to forgiveness.

B. Choose a healthy response.

1. Don't explode
-James 1:19
"...But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;"
2. Ephesians 4:26

"BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,"
3. Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."
4. Matthew 5:38-42

"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.' 39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 " Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you."

5. Spiritual minded people do what is best for others Philippians 2:3-4

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

6. Don't be reactionary in nature

- a. acting as a natural instinct with any thought
- b. But carefully respond, pray and read God's word first.
- c. Then move toward forgiveness

C. We should question the hurt within us.

- 1. It is estimated that 75% of all hurts shouldn't be really hurts anyway
- 2. We should ask ourselves some questions about the way we feel:
 - a. How is my perception
 - b. Am I blowing this out of proportion?
 - c. Am I hurt because someone hasn't meet my expectation?
 - Did I clearly communicate the expectations?
 - Was I fair with the level of expectation?
 - Did the other person agree to the expectation?
 - d. Is the present hurt just one of many that are building a collective pressure?

C. Try to understand the offender

- 1. Why are they acting the way they are
 - a. Maybe they are angry themselves
 - b. Maybe they are hurt
 - c. Maybe they don't know any better
- 2. What is going on in their lives
 - a. Is the world closing in on them
 - b. Is it possible that they are venting.

3. How were they raise to think about things.
4. The old adage stands true....you can't understand a man until you have walked a mile in their shoes.
5. A spiritual person's first response should beGRACE !
 - a. If it is not there is work to be done at home.

D. Desire what is best for the offender.

1. This would be a choice of love 1 Corinthians 13
2. The spiritual person realizes that people hide behind offenses, and is able to look beyond the moment and consider the eternity of the other person.
3. God has given us the conscience choice to say "forgive them for they know not what they are doing"

E. Choose to defend the offender

1. Take the offender before the throne of God with you in prayer and plead his case for clemency.

F. Forgive from the heart fully

1. Don't keep records
2. Make them feel valued
3. They should feel your respect.
4. Try to help the offender, but not with judging

Conclusion:

A spiritual person is a forgiven and a forgiving person.

Matthew 6:14-15

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15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.