

The Beginning of Forgiveness

Memory Verse: John 13:16

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (*The words of our Lord Jesus Christ*)

Read: John 13:1-17

This can be a difficult subject so let me strongly encourage you to look to the Word of God for the answers. Spend some extra time this week studying Scripture and looking for those practical ways in which it applies to our lives today. Don't take my word for it – follow Jesus! John 13:16 - We are to follow His example.

1. God expects us to forgive, but are we really expected to forget? What if they do it again?

Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you". So again we are to follow His example. Hebrews 8 talks about God's new covenant and verse 12 says "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more". Hebrews 10:17 says "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more". Seems pretty clear that God doesn't even remember the sins So **maybe** we shouldn't either! As humans though, maybe forgetting is something we can't or even should not do. Jesus never told us to forget. Sometimes we have to work through our past – especially serious hurt - not just forget it. If we don't move past it then we can never have the full life that Jesus wants for us. That doesn't mean forgetting it, but dealing with it. As followers of Jesus, we are still called to forgive. In Matthew 18:21-22 Jesus uses a really big number to indicate that we should keep forgiving each other no matter how many times we are offended. He certainly continues to forgive us!

2. What if they never say they are sorry? Are we to ignore the offense and just be Christian doormats?

Luke 17:3-4 tells us to rebuke those who sin against you. It is okay to tell someone that you were offended, but, we are called to forgive them. Luke 23:34 "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." Doesn't sound like there was any repentance but Jesus forgave them anyway. If we are to follow His example, it seems that we are to forgive everyone, whether they repent or not. Their repentance is between them and God, not them and us. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 warns us that if we don't forgive, we give Satan an opportunity to outwit us. We belong to God and have submitted our rights and our will to Him. If He has forgiven the people who have wronged us and they are clear with Him, then us waiting for an apology just means that **we** are not clear with Him, we have not done what He asked **us** to do. Unforgiveness hurts **us**. Jesus has already forgiven them – if we fail to forgive, it won't hurt them.

3. So why should we repent? Why should anyone? How does forgiveness involve consequences?

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins **and** purify us from all unrighteousness". Jesus forgives us whether we repent or not, but how much better to be purified as well! John 10:10 says that Jesus came not just so we would have life, but have life more abundantly. More than *just* forgiveness. More than *just* life. Purification and an abundant, full life! Jesus forgives and bears with us just like He asks us to do in Colossians 3:13. Forgiveness is a gift from God and like any other gift – we will enjoy it a lot more if we take it, open it up and live differently because of it! Luke 7:41-43 says that the more we are forgiven, the more we love. If we want to love God more (and I do) then we need to recognize our need for forgiveness and accept it from Him. The more we can do that, the more we fall in love with Jesus. Maybe that also means that the more we forgive other people – the more we will be loved? That doesn't mean there are not consequences to our choices or consequences for those who have wronged us, but maybe those are up to God – not us. We should always forgive, but how are we to decide when consequences are appropriate? James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault". We need to be led by the Holy Spirit in our dealings with each other and rely on His wisdom not our own to decide what consequences make sense when. If someone steals some cash – forgive them, but maybe don't put them in charge of money. Not unforgiveness or punishment but a consequence based on previous life choices. Consequences and Forgiveness are two very different things. That gets back to not forgetting doesn't it?

4. Why do you think Jesus didn't wait until Judas had left the room before he knelt down to wash the feet of His disciples?

As an example of His unconditional love and forgiveness, Jesus never forgives because we are worthy, deserving or even because we repent but rather Jesus forgives because of His nature is to love unconditionally. Remember, we are talking about forgiveness, not salvation. Only God saves through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross but all of us are called to forgive.

5. What does this story teach you about love and forgiveness?

That I should not base my reason to forgive on whether the other person apologizes or says he is sorry or somehow tries to make it up to me. Forgiveness should become a part of my character make up in Christ.

6. How would it have made you feel to have Jesus kneel before you and wash your dirty feet as you recline in the chair? How might you respond to His actions?

I would be embarrassed to have my Lord do such a thing. I would be like Peter saying you can't wash my feet. I would probably lose it and cry at his act of love and unconditional forgiveness.

7. Why is it so hard for us to think of letting Jesus wash our feet and yet so easy to let him wash our sins away?

I think some of us can get so used to the idea that, "I am forgiven" that the deep amazing truth is weakened. I think it is always wonderful when someone just becomes aware of love and forgiveness of Jesus and how amazing they respond. The response in worship and obedience can be overwhelming. I must never forget how undeserving I am of forgiveness from Jesus so I never get relaxed in my response to His cleansing.

Read: Ephesians 4:1-3 and Colossians 3:12-14

In Ephesians Paul says we are to "live a life worthy of the calling", and in Colossians he says that we are "God's chosen people". Then in our memory verse this week, Jesus concludes his foot washing session with a lesson to follow His example. That is by definition, what a follower (Disciple) does is follow and do as the leader does by example.

8. What does all this teach you as it relates to the passage in Ephesians 4:1-3 and Colossians 3:12-14

As a called child of God and a follower of Jesus I must watch and listen to Him and do as He does and as He teaches me in obedience. As that relates to these passages, I must learn to be humble, gentle, patient, loving, compassionate, kind, forgiving and always working toward complete unity.