

EXCELLING IN OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Lesson 8: Forgiving One Another

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

1. Forgiveness is to put off all thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors toward others not consistent with my identity in Christ, and replace them with thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with my identity in Christ; to think about and treat other people as Christ thinks about and treats me.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience....

Colossians 3: 12

2. Forgiveness is SURRENDERING TO GOD the desire to hurt the person who hurt me.

...bearing [to hold back] with one another...

Colossians 3: 13a

3. Forgiveness is ERASING IN MY MIND the record of the wrong committed against me and writing, "FORGIVEN!"

...forgiving each other whoever has a complaint against anyone...

Colossians 3: 13b

Key Truth: Bitterness is choosing to making an entry in my mind of the wrong done to me, which I read and reread, hoping for a chance to get even.

Forgiveness is choosing not to take into account the wrong suffered by making a PROMISE TO GOD not to hold the wrong against my offender. To forgive is to give my word to God never to bring up the offense again, either to myself in self pity, to another in gossip, or to the offending party in retaliation.

4. Forgiveness is looking at the wound inflicted on me as God's way of drawing my attention to the spiritual need of my offender and calling me TO HEAL THE ONE WHO WOUNDED ME.

...just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Colossians 3: 13c

TO FORGIVE OR NOT TO FORGIVE? (Matthew 18: 21-35)

1. Does forgiveness have limits? (vs. 21-22)

Peter actually asked the wrong question. The more pertinent question is, “Why should I forgive at all?” When I see why I should forgive then I will come to understand that forgiveness is to be extended to others WITHOUT LIMITS.

2. Why should I forgive others? (vs. 23-27)

Because of the magnitude of God’s compassion in forgiving me of the INCALCULABLE & UNPAYABLE debt of sin I owed to God.

3. What is God’s attitude toward me, a forgiven sinner, when I refuse to forgive a fellow believer? (vs. 28-35)

Since you have received My maximum mercy, who are you to exact justice from others? The mercy I demonstrated to you demands you do the same toward others. You are to forgive others as Christ forgave you, & not to do so is the height of HYPOCRISY which invokes My ANGER.

4. What are the consequences of unforgiveness? (vs. 34-35 with Eph. 4: 31).

God delivers me over to the TORTURERS.

- **BITTERNESS** - Resisting God’s grace by refusing to forgive which results in my hurt becoming infected with RESENTMENT.
- **WRATH** - Reliving the offense over and over again in my mind until I am consumed in the FIRES OF REVENGE.
- **ANGER** - Focusing my energy and resources to ATTACK my offender instead of seeking RECONCILIATION.
- **CLAMOR** - Harsh words concerning my offender in order to JUSTIFY my bitterness, wrath, & anger.
- **SLANDER** - Launching a CHARACTER ASSASSINATION on the person who hurt me; names are called, walls are built, enemies are made; always at war never at peace.
- **MALICE** - RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL in the name of God which is the epitome of hypocrisy & sin. Slowly & painfully the acid of resentment eats away my peace & joy leaving me in the dark lonely prison cell of misery.

Want out of the prison cell? The key is in the hand of your OFFENDER.