

Rich Humphrey  
**SESSION 3 | Responding with  
Forgiveness**

## I. JESUS'S SHOCKING COMMAND TO PETER

**Matthew 18:21** - *Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"*

**Matthew 18:22** - *Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."*

## II. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

**Matthew 18:22** - <sup>23</sup> "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Definition: Forgiveness is taking the debt that is rightfully owed to you when you are wronged, and instead of extracting payment; cancelling it.

*"Forgiveness looks wrong in the eye, names the wrong for what it is, feels the sting, and then consciously acts "unfairly" in return."*

**David Powlison**

## GOOD & ANGRY: OVERCOMING IRRITATION, OUTBURSTS, & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

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### Attitudinal Forgiveness

**Mark 11:25** - *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

*“We have forgiven when we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies mischief, but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them.”*

**Thomas Watson**, *Body of Divinity*

### Transactional Forgiveness

**Matthew 18:15** - *If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.*

*“Transacted forgiveness and actual reconciliation are desirable fruits, they are not always obtainable. But, by God’s mercy, we can always establish our hearts in mercy.”*

**David Powlison**

## III. HOW DO WE FORGIVE?

### Remembering the Sovereignty of God

**Genesis 45: 4-7** - <sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come <sup>[c]</sup> closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup> For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. <sup>7</sup> God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

### Paying Down the Debt

**Matthew 18:27** - *And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.*

## IV. HOW DO WE BECOME FORGIVING PEOPLE?

### Remembering the Sovereignty of God

**Genesis 45: 4-7** - <sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come <sup>closer</sup> closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup> Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup> For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. <sup>7</sup> God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

### Paying Down the Debt

**Matthew 18:27** - And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

## **CASE STUDY:**

Bob and Sally in a dating relationship. Sally, had been working for weeks planning a trip for the two of them to visit her parents. But, when the big weekend came, Bob forgot all about it. He double-booked himself and went to the beach with his buddies. He forgot to take his cell phone charger and was unavailable all weekend.

When he finally does call Sally, she is fuming. His string of lame excuses reveal that he doesn't treat what happened seriously and is mainly concerned about defending his actions. Sally goes ballistic. She recounts all his present and past faults in graphic detail. She charges him with a number of malicious motives. She screams, "You don't care! You always forget things I care about! You never pay attention to what is important to me!"

Bob gets increasingly defensive and hostile. So, Sally calls in the heavy artillery. She vents expletives, calls Bob names, and pronounces curses. Then she again trumpets her own righteousness, "I would never ever do that! When I promise to do something for you, I do it! I make the effort with you and your family!" Then she storms off leaving Bob to baste in his own guilt.

Later, Sally feels bad for her angry outburst. She goes back to Bob and says, "I'm sorry for what I said. I didn't mean it. I was overtired and upset." "That's OK," Bob answers. Then they kiss and make up.

1. Did forgiveness take place in this scenario? If not, what was missing?
2. What could Sally have said differently if she had taken time for "attitudinal forgiveness" before she talked with Bob after he returned?
3. Did Sally mean what she said? What would have been a more constructive thing to say to work toward "transactional forgiveness?"
4. What deep desires could have been driving Sally's anger?
5. How could Bob have done better in resolving this situation?

## **TAKE HOME QUESTIONS:**

1. Is there someone (or a group of people) in your life right now that you are struggling to forgive?
  - a. How would you view the situation differently if you remembered the sovereignty of God over everything in your life, even the circumstances where you were hurt?
  - b. What things do you need to do to “pay down the debt?”
  - c. Spend time reading, meditating on, and praying through Ephesians 2:1-10.
    - i. What is God showing you about your own sin?
    - ii. About the wonder of His forgiveness?
    - iii. How does that change the way you think about the person that hurt you?
  
2. Think about your marriage or close friendships. When conflict occurs, is there a pattern of repentance and forgiveness?
  - a. If not, why?
  - b. What changes do you need to make in your own heart to bring these relationships to a healthier place?
  
3. We are called not only to be quick to forgive, but also to be quick to ask forgiveness.
  - a. How long has it been since you asked for forgiveness?
  - b. If it has been some time, what is keeping you from being willing to ask for the forgiveness of your spouse? Friends? Coworkers?