



Living Forgiveness

Mike Sotski

November 19, 2017

...Lord, How often should I forgive someone who sins against me?

False Narrative: there is a limited number of times that forgiveness should be offered, or that forgiveness is only offered under certain circumstances.

Matthew 18: 23-35 NLT

“Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt.

But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”

So What is Forgiveness?

Forgiveness is: A commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him although his commitment does not eliminate all consequences.

Chris Brauns - Unpacking

When someone has wronged you, it means they owe you, they have a debt with you. Forgiveness is to absorb the cost of the debt yourself. You pay the price yourself, and you refuse to exact the price out of the person in any way. Forgiveness is to a) free the person from penalty for a sin by b) paying the price yourself.

Tim Keller

Mathew 18 :15-17 NLT

If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

The full work of Forgiveness is only possible in response to repentance of two sides coming together. But we can still lay down our ill will and hand over our anger to God. We must also position our hearts to see the situation reconciled.

Romans 12:18 NIV

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

- A true litmus test for us is to ask: Can I pray a blessing on the other person?

Forgiveness ...

...is not equal to trust.

...doesn't mean you put yourself in a position to be hurt again and again

...is not just forgetting what has been done.

...includes setting healthy boundaries.

We forgive others when we strive against all thoughts of revenge, when we will not celebrate our enemies' mischief, but we wish them well, we grieve their calamities, we pray for them, we seek reconciliation with them and we show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them

Thomas Watson

To live with unforgiveness leads to a bitterness of heart that erodes your soul, that deteriorates our physical bodies and that robs us of the joy and contentment that we are really seeking.

1 John 4:20-21 NLT

If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive... and then to mention the subject at all is to be greeted by howls of anger.

CS Lewis

To be forgiven is such sweetness that honey is tasteless in comparison with it. But yet there is one thing sweeter still, and that is to forgive. As it is more blessed to give than to receive, so to forgive rises a stage higher in experience than to be forgiven.

Charles Spurgeon

Spiritual Practice: Forgiveness

We don't have to live long to realize that as humans we will experience conflict in relationships. Without question you will offend or be offended by someone at some time. It is what we do with the offense that transforms the way we live and interact with those around us.

Jesus teaching in Matthew 18:15-17 should be a central practice for those who desire to be apprentices of Jesus. It means that we are willing to have honest conversations that will probably be a little uncomfortable. Unfortunately, we often believe a false narrative that says -If I just ignore the issue it will go away, and so we just try to leave the issue alone. The problem becomes that the issue never just goes away. We may continually pull off the tops, but the root of the problem still exists.

Paul writes in Romans 12:18(NLT) *Do all that you can to live at peace with everyone.* Paul's words admonish us to actively pursue peace in our relationships with others. His challenge is that we cannot sit back and hope that it happens, but we must be an active participant in the process or restoration and reconciliation of relationships.

As a Spiritual Practice that helps us grow as apprentices of Jesus here's something simple but effective to help us in this regard:

Take some time at the beginning or end of each day quiet our hearts and ask "God would you search my heart and show me if there is anyone who I am not at peace with?"

As God brings people to mind ***pray blessing over them*** as an act of changing the stories that we are rehearsing in our minds about the person. It allows us to join with Jesus as he intercedes on our behalf. Then as the story we are rehearsing about the other person is changing in our minds and hearts, ***commit to go to that person*** and work towards reconciliation.