

# Parables: Small Stories – Big Truths

## “Forgiving Others”

### Matthew 18:21-35

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / July 10, 2016

Forgiveness has to be woven right into the heart of our earthly relationships, because without forgiveness human relationships cannot be sustained in any meaningful way.

Whenever forgiveness become optional, relationships become fragile and ultimately unsustainable and sadly even disposable.

Forgiveness is not all about you trying to **forget** what that other person did **TO you**... instead forgiveness is your choice to **remember** what Christ **already** did **FOR you** on the cross and to act on THAT by extending that same forgiveness out to your spouse or others regardless of how you feel!

**Three Steps** to start moving towards forgiveness:

#### I. Start by Looking Past the Other Person that Hurt You and Back to God

The starting point of forgiveness has nothing at all to do with us, and everything to do with God. Forgiveness is something God authored and started! It's in the very heart and soul of what He does.

If you don't understand the depth of YOUR OWN sin against God and HOW MUCH He's forgiven you, then you'll never have what it takes to forgive other people around you.

**Ephesians 4:30-32** “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. “ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. “ And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

**Colossians 3:13** “... if anyone has a complaint against another; **even as** Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

**Matthew 18:33** “Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow servant, **just as** I had mercy on you?”

“Since Christ's new covenant with His church is created by and sustained by blood-bought grace, therefore, human marriages are meant to showcase that new-covenant grace. And the way husbands and wives showcase it is by resting in the experience of God's grace and bending it out from a vertical experience with God into a horizontal experience with their spouse. In other words, in marriage you live hour by hour in glad dependence on God's forgiveness and justification and promised future grace, and you bend it out toward your spouse hour by hour—as an extension of God's forgiveness and justification and promised help... take the vertical grace of forgiveness and justification and bend them out horizontally to your spouse. Marriage is meant to be a unique matrix for this display of God's grace.”

**Momentary Marriage**, John Piper, p. 43, 47

Not until you have really been sinned against do you even have an opportunity to put on display the mercy and Gospel of God! But when you do, God's called you to take that vertical forgiveness you've received so freely from Him and bend it out horizontally toward those who sin against you.

## II. Stop Expecting Payment and Choose to Absorb the Cost of Their Sin

"Let's be honest with each other: *grudges can be fun!* We enjoy withholding forgiveness because it permits us to keep our enemies (and even some of our friends) under control. It gives us the opportunity to manipulate them into providing things we want from them. We use their offense against us as a rope to dangle them over the fires of vengeance. If we were to completely forgive them, we would lose our excuse for self-pity. And forgiveness would set them free from their obligation to us to 'make good.' Few things cut across the grain of human nature like forgiving others. Breathing is easy. Eating is fun. No one thinks twice about blinking one's eyes. But forgiving others is sheer agony! It grates on our soul like fingernails on a chalkboard." **To Love Mercy**, C. Samuel Storms, p. 153

True forgiveness looks the other person's sin square in the face for what it is: evil. It then absorbs the cost of that sin by the power of God's abundant grace. When you do that it sets the other sinner free; it shuts down the account as cancelled.

Forgiveness will cost you, but it'll cost you far less than what it cost Christ to forgive you!

"Everyone who forgives goes through a death and experiences nails, blood, sweat, and tears. Forgiveness is costly suffering. Forgiveness at first always feels far worse than bitterness. Forgiveness means refusing to make them pay for what they did. However, to refrain from lashing out at someone when you want to do so with all your being is agony. It is a form of suffering. You not only suffer the original loss of happiness, reputation, and opportunity, but now you forgo the consolation of inflicting the same on them. You are absorbing the debt, taking the cost of it completely on yourself instead of taking it out on the other person. It hurts terribly. Many people would say it feels like a kind of death." Timothy Keller, **The Reason For God**, p. 188-189

There's absolutely nothing in us that would naturally choose this way of biblical forgiveness but forgiveness is supposed to characterize Christians. That's what makes us look like our Father and remind people of their Savior.

### a. So then WHY do so many Christians struggle with forgiving others?

Christians that refuse to forgive others probably aren't Christians at all. In **Matthew 6:14-15** when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray He says if you don't forgive others, God won't forgive you.

Another reason Christians struggle to forgive:

"All of us get hurt from time to time, and most of us are hurt very badly at some point in our lives. But Christians have the incredible resource - and the responsibility to forgive. Not out of our own strength, but out of the strength God provides through our experience of His forgiveness... We can pray that God will help us love that person. Does this sound difficult? It's not difficult. It's impossible, unless you and I have **feasted** on the cross of Christ." *A Call to Die*, David Nasser, p. 216

If you find yourself angry after forgiving someone your forgiveness might not be genuine or it might be that some sins committed against you are multi-faceted in the way they are carried out and in their consequences, so they require multiple moments of forgiveness.

Sometimes that's God grace to not show you all the consequences at once. It's going to be a road ahead of forgiveness. Keep choosing to forgive as consequences come up.

### III. Refuse to Let All the Sin in Your Relationship Define or Defile the Whole Thing

We live in a **Romans 8:18-26** world. Everything is groaning and has a measure of futility built right into it. It would help tremendously if you lowered your expectations on your spouse and others around you and ask God for grace to see past some of all the sin and hurt.

“Picture our marriage as a grassy field. You enter it at the beginning full of hope and joy... But before long, you begin to step in cow pies. Some seasons of your marriage they may seem to be everywhere... You try to forgive them and endure them with grace. But they have a way of dominating the relationship. It may not even be true, but sometimes it feels like that's all there is—cow pies [that's manure piles – for those of you that didn't grow up on a farm]. Noel and I have come to believe that the combination of forbearance and forgiveness leads to the creation of a compost pile. That's where you shovel the cow pies.

You both look at each other and simply admit that there are a lot of cow pies. But you say to each other: ‘You know, there is more to this relationship than cow pies. And we are losing sight of that because we keep focusing on these cow pies.’ ***This Momentary Marriage***, John Piper; p. 59

Forgiveness is the gift that you give each other again and again so that your marriage or any other relationship doesn't get stuck in a cow pie stinking up the whole place.

If there's someone you need to forgive today, don't wait another minute to do so. It has nothing to do with forgetting or feeling different, but everything to do with remembering what God has done for you in the death of His Son.

**I Peter 2:9-10, 21-25** “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; “ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy... For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’; who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes we are healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”