



Gospel Community Notes & Questions

Title: The Practice of Forgiveness

Text: Matthew 18:21-35

Theme: Forgiveness is extending the grace and pardon you've received from Jesus to those who sin against you.

Teaching Notes: When we are sinned against – and especially when that sin is extra hurtful or harmful – we struggle to forgive. It feels like we're just "letting them off the hook" for what they did. How will they ever learn their lesson if we don't teach them? Shouldn't they have to pay? What does it even mean to forgive someone, given that some things are impossible to forget?

Outline:

1. The Mandate.

- Forgiveness isn't optional. It's as basic as anything in the Christian life.

2. The Meaning.

- ἀφίημι means "to send away, to release, to let go of."
- χαρίζομαι means "to freely and graciously pardon or pay the debt of another, to show favor."
- Forgiveness is always grace. It's the undeserved kindness of letting go of all resentment and revenge for the wrongs of another.

3. The Model.

- a. Jesus demonstrated the pattern of forgiveness.
- b. Jesus demonstrated the nature of forgiveness.

4. The Impediment.

- a. We hate unfairness.
- b. We love revenge.

5. The Motivation.

- a. You have to savor the grace of God toward you.
- b. You have to trust the justice of God.



Questions to explore individually and with your group:

1. What are your observations about our current culture's view of forgiveness?
2. Do others ask you for forgiveness as often as you think they should? Do you ask for forgiveness as often as you should? Discuss reasons for this gap between what we ought to do and what we practice.
3. Reflect on a time when you chose to forgive someone who'd hurt you deeply. What did that feel like at the time? How do you feel about it now?
4. Think of someone you either struggle to forgive or refuse to forgive. What is your biggest personal barrier to forgiveness? Instead of forgiving, how do you want to treat people who hurt you?
5. Still thinking of the person or situation in #4, what is your lack of forgiveness doing to you – spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, even physically? What are you “gaining” from your unforgiving spirit? What are you losing?
6. What does the Gospel have to say about #4-5?
7. Read Matthew 6:12, 14-15, Matthew 18:32-35, and Mark 11:25. What is the relationship between our forgiveness and God's forgiveness?
8. Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:12-13. What is the relationship between our forgiveness and God's forgiveness?
9. Think of someone you resent and have not forgiven. What is your next step right now? Make a specific action plan to move toward grace and forgiveness.
10. What's one practical, specific thing you'll do with the message this week?