

Road to Emmaus

Biblical Forgiveness

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I. Why Is Forgiveness Important?

- a. It is necessary for reconciliation with God.
 - i. Sin separates us (Rom. 3:23, 6:23a).
 - ii. Forgiveness requires the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22).
 - iii. God forgives sinners through Christ's death (2 Cor. 5:18-19).
- b. It is necessary for relationship with people.
 - i. We must forgive as we've been forgiven (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32).
 - ii. Forgiveness reflects that we are his followers (Jn. 13:35).
 - iii. Lack of forgiveness hinders our witness of the gospel (Jn. 17:21-23).
- c. It reflects the heart of God (Ps. 86:5; 130:3-4; Dan. 9:9).
- d. So why don't people forgive others? (Paul Tripp)
 - i. Debt is power – in having something to hold over another person.
 - ii. Debt is identity – it allows us to feel superior to that person.
 - iii. Debt is entitlement - we can feel as if others owe us.
 - iv. Debt is weaponry – like a loaded gun to bring out and use any time.
 - v. Debt puts us in God's position – as their judge (Jas. 4:11, 12).

II. What is Forgiveness?

- a. Forgiveness defined: "To release from legal or moral obligation or consequence. When God forgives, he commits or promises that he will no longer hold the sin against the person being forgiven" (Brauns).
 - i. "Forgiveness is a lifting of the charge of guilt from another, a formal declaration of the fact and a promise (made and kept) never to remember the wrong against him in the future" (Jay Adams) (Jer. 31:34).

- ii. When we forgive it is a decision and a promise to:
 - 1. Not dwell on the incident mentally,
 - 2. Not bring up the incident again and use it against the other person,
 - 3. Not talk to others about the incident, and
 - 4. Not allow the incident to stand between you and the other person or hinder your personal relationship with them (Ken Sande).
- b. Forgiveness demonstrated: The cross of Christ.
 - i. We have been forgiven all our trespasses (Col. 2:13-14; Ps. 103:12).

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:13-14).
 - ii. We are under obligation to forgive others (Co. 3:12-13; Eph. 4:32).

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive (Col. 3:12-13).
- c. An example of God's forgiveness (Matt. 18: 21-35).
 - i. Peter asks Jesus about the frequency and limit to forgiveness (21-22).
 - ii. Jesus answers by telling about a king, a servant, and a debt owed (23-34).
 - iii. Jesus establishes a principle for forgiveness "from the heart" (35).

III. How Does Forgiveness Work?

- a. Two perspectives: a vertical, followed by a horizontal (Paul Tripp).
- b. Vertical – Offended goes to God the judge. An unconditional act of grace.

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 (Mk. 11:25).

- i. Do not minimize or ignore the sin.
 - ii. Respond to the offender with grace (Rom. 12:17-21).
 - iii. Clears your heart of bitterness and condemnation (Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60).
- c. Horizontal - Offended goes to the offender. A transaction of grace conditional upon repentance.
 - i. When do you confront someone?
 - 1. When you observe a lifestyle / pattern of sin (Lk. 17:3, 4).
 - 2. When their sin is harmful to themselves or others.

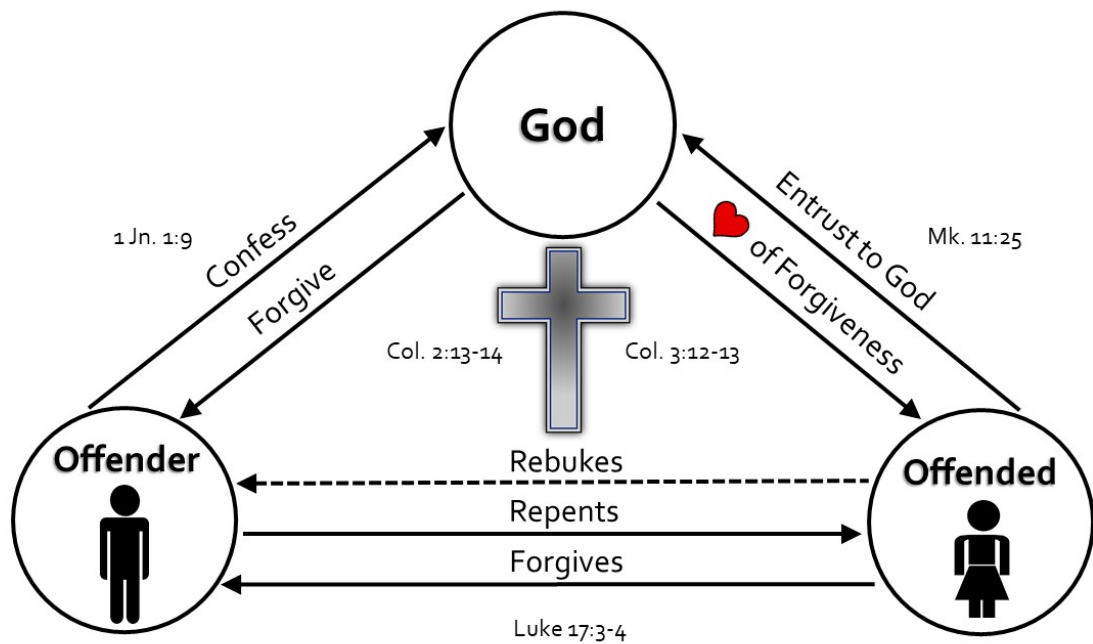
Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." (Lk. 17:3-4).

 - 3. You may choose to overlook their sin (1 Pet. 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:7).
 - ii. How do you confront someone?
 - 1. Examine yourself (Matt. 7:1-5).
 - 2. Examine your motives (Gal. 6:1).
 - 3. Examine your words (Pr. 12:18).
- d. Offender goes to God – as all sin is against God, and hence fellowship with God must be restored (Ps. 51:1-4; 1 Jn. 1:9).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).

IV. When is Forgiveness Needed?

- a. When there is repentance (Lk. 17:3).
- b. When we know God requires it; not when we feel like it (Mk. 11: 25).
- c. Every time there is repentance, over and over again (Matt. 18:21, 22; Lk. 17:3, 4).
- d. Only when a person “sins” according the Bible.



Application:

- Ask God to reveal any sin that you may need to confess to him (Ps. 139:23, 24).
- Create a list of offenses you have committed against another (spouse, child or friend).
- Present the list, repent and ask if other offenses should be added.

Resources:

Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect?* (Crossway, 2010), 90-95.

Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness* (Crossway, 2008), 48-61.

Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Zondervan, 1979), 229.

Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker* (Baker, 2004), 189-190.