

Bible Study on Character - Forgiving One Another

The dictionary definition of forgive is to cease to feel resentment against an offender, i.e., to pardon one's enemies.

During WWII in France, a young nun was returning to her convent from the market. A soldier on a motorcycle saw her and pulled over. Although she thought he stopped to help her with her heavy basket of food, she soon found out otherwise. As he forced into the woods, she screamed, but no one heard her.

The trauma that occurred that day haunted her with nightmares for years, but gradually she began to heal. Years later, she was chosen to host a meeting of German teachers as a gesture of post-war reconciliation. Among them was her aggressor. It all came back! The bitterness and the thoughts of revenge were unbearable until she spent the night in prayer. Crying out to God, she eventually found the grace to serve them--all of them. She was finally free!

Until we forgive, we are the prisoner of the person who has offended us.

What is the Biblical measure of forgiveness?

Seventy times seven. In Matthew 18:21-22, we read, Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"

"No!" Jesus replied, "seventy times seven!" What does this mean?

Unlimited In Luke 17:3-4, Jesus says, "I am warning you! If another believer sins, rebuke him; then if he repents, forgive him. Even if he wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, forgive him."

As God forgave us. Read what Paul says in Ephesians 4:32

What are the benefits of forgiving?

It is necessary for our own forgiveness. Jesus said, "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." (Mark 11:25, 26)

It restores Christian fellowship. Now it is time to forgive him and comfort him. Otherwise he may become so discouraged that he won't be able to recover. Now show him that you still love him. (2 Cor. 2:5-10)

Spiritual cleansing. James says that the elders of the church should pray over those who are sick and the Lord will make them well, adding, "And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven." (James 5:15-16)

Examples of forgiveness:

Esau and Jacob. (Genesis 33:4-15)

Joseph (Genesis 45:8-15)

Moses (Numbers 12:1-13)

David (2 Sam 19:18-23)

Solomon (1 Kings. 1:52, 53)

Jesus (Luke 23:34)

Stephen (Acts 7:59-60)

Paul (2 Timothy 4:16)

Questions:

1. What kind of offense do you find most difficult to forgive?
2. Do you meditate on an offense over and over?
3. How do you find it in yourself to let go of past offenses even though you "deserve" to hang onto them?
4. Does forgiving someone mean that the offense is forgotten and has no further consequences?
5. Do you ever feel that you are a prisoner of unforgiveness? When? Why?
6. What is the only phrase in the Lord's prayer with a "condition" attached? (Matthew 6:12)