

Practicing Forgiveness

"Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

Take a minute and read the extended passage of forgiveness in Matthew 18:23-35.

The world has a (Biblically based) standard that they call the Golden rule: "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". For us as Christians the bar is raised a bit. We should do unto others as has been done unto us. Or as Jesus says in **Luke 6:36** "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

While we don't have a problem accepting God's forgiveness for our sins, why is it that when it comes time for us to extend forgiveness we act like we haven't had an example? Oh, I don't know how many Christians quote the context of **Lamentations 3:22-23**, "the Lord's mercies are new every morning". Sadly many of us practice a lifestyle that says "the Lord's mercies are new every morning for me, but it'll be some time before I can forgive you!"

The idea of Jesus dying on the cross for my sins before I even committed them, before I even acknowledged them and before I even asked for forgiveness is huge. Yet how do I respond when that close friend does me wrong, when my spouse doesn't remember something I thought was important or when my co-worker doesn't take the time to communicate with me? My response should be just as Jesus' is for me. Forgiveness: leaving it behind, letting it go.

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Jesus teaches us that we are even to forgive our enemies: **Luke 6:27** "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you..." The more you have a problem with someone's attitude or personality, the more someone may hurt you and test you, the more you should be praying for them. If we apply forgiveness and prayer as the way we respond in whatever relationship, friend or enemy, we will be demonstrating the Christ-likeness that we are called to.

The lifestyle of forgiveness is the one we need to live as Christians. By this we will testify of a forgiving God who said, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do."

Is there anyone that the Holy Spirit has brought to your mind that you have not forgiven? It's time to take hold of the grace and love that Christ offers and set yourself free!
