

# SPIRITUAL MAINTENANCE

## *Forgiveness*

### *Matthew 6:12, 14-15*

#### ***Jesus Teaches We Must Forgive***

***Matthew 6:12 (KJV) 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.***

- One of the key petitions of the Lord's Prayer and prayer in general is *forgiveness*
- Jesus spent a lot of time teaching on forgiveness because it is critical to being in right relationship with God and critical to our own prayers being answered
- The prayer first petitions God to forgive us of our debts, or sins
- In prayer we are asking God to forgive the debt of sin in our lives
- We have a sin debt when we fail to do the will of God
- We are asking God to forgive the guilt and punishment of this debt
- We are also asking God to forgive us as we have forgiven others
- The prayer is saying we have an obligation, not an option to forgive others
- The prayer is suggesting that we are forgiving others to the same degree that we ourselves want and need forgiveness
- If we don't forgive, we pronounce the same judgement on ourselves that we have for others
- If we desire to be forgiven by God we must request AND give forgiveness

#### ***Jesus Teaches that Forgiveness Is Unlimited***

***Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV) <sup>21</sup> Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? <sup>22</sup> Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.***

- Peter asked Jesus an intriguing question, "***Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?***"
- Peter wanted to know what the *limit* is, or the "ceiling" on forgiveness
- Peter thought *seven times* was being very generous because the rabbis in his day said forgiving someone three times was normal
- Jesus tells Peter it's *not* seven times, but *seventy times seven*; or that our forgiveness should have *no limits*
- The point Jesus is making is that genuine forgiveness is like Paul writing about agape love in 1 Corinthians 13; *love keeps no record of wrongs*
- The same is true of forgiveness, there's no limit to how many times we forgive
- Genuine forgiveness is not a "numbers issue", it's a matter of the *heart*, it's not about keeping score
- A heart or spirit of forgiveness does not measure and limit the number of times it will forgive.
- Jesus wants us to adopt the habit of being people who *always* forgive and are *willing* to forgive
- In life we are going to be offended by others and we are going to offend others and it's impossible to maintain good human relationships without a spirit of forgiveness
- To maintain good relationships with our brothers/sisters in Christ, we need to know:
  - We all will be offended or offend someone at some point
- No one does things perfectly all the time; we need to have a heart of forgiveness

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- Jesus took the limits off forgiveness so that we would have plenty of opportunities to *practice* forgiveness
- Genuine forgiveness takes prayer *and* practice

#### **Jesus Teaches About the Dangers of Unforgiveness**

**Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV) <sup>14</sup> For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup> But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

- Jesus gives a startling warning about forgiveness: If we refuse to forgive others, God will also refuse to forgive us.
- Because when we don't forgive others, we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness
- We must remember, forgiveness is *conditional*
  - We have sinned against God, and others have sinned against us.
  - If we want God to forgive us, we *must* forgive those who have sinned against us.
- God's forgiveness of sin is not the *direct result* of our forgiving others, but it is based on our realizing what forgiveness means
- When we refuse to forgive others imprison ourselves **Matthew 18:32-34 (KJV) <sup>32</sup> Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: <sup>33</sup> Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? <sup>34</sup> And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.**
- It is easy to ask God for forgiveness for ourselves, but some believers find it difficult to grant it to others
- When we refuse to forgive, we've stooped to the level of the offender has, in fact, we've *become* an offender
- If there is an unforgiving spirit, there will never peace
- An unforgiving spirit effect our emotions, mind, and body
- Whenever we ask God to forgive us for our sins, we should also ask, Have I forgiven the people who have wronged me?

#### **How to Walk in Forgiveness**

- Choose to forgive
  - Forgiveness is not based on feelings
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you
- Obey what the Bible says about forgiving others
  - We are to seek forgiveness for ourselves and give forgiveness to others **Matthew 6:12 (KJV) <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**
  - We are to pray for our enemies **Luke 6:27-28 (KJV) <sup>27</sup> But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, <sup>28</sup> Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.**

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- We are to bless those who have hurt us in some way **Romans 12:14 (KJV) 14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.**
- Therefore, the believer is charged to do something that could be most difficult: to speak *well* of those who persecute him.
- The Bible tells us to forbear and forgive as Jesus forgave us **Colossians 3:13 (KJV) 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**
- *Forbearance*: the believer must put on the garment of forbearing or forbearance.
- Forbearing means to hold back; to put up with; to refrain; to bear with; to control.
- Something we often forget: there are many things about *everyone* of us that people have to forbear.
- The believer is to forbear the “flaws” of others.
- Forgiveness: the believer must put on the garment of forgiveness; we must be forgiving
- The word means to be gracious to a person; to pardon him for some wrong done against us.
- But no matter what they have done, we are to have a forgiving spirit clothing us.
- Why? Because Christ has forgiven us.
- **No matter how much wrong a person has done against us, it cannot match the wrong we have done against Christ.**
- Yet, Christ has forgiven us.

#### **Jesus: Our Model of Forgiveness**

- It is easier *to receive* forgiveness than *to extend* forgiveness
- It's easier *to teach* forgiveness than *to live and model* forgiveness
- Jesus not only taught forgiveness, but He modeled it for us
- Jesus not only taught frequently about forgiveness, he also demonstrated his own willingness to forgive.
- Jesus *modeled* forgiveness
- One of the last things Jesus did before He died on the cross was forgive those who hurt Him
- Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death—Jewish leaders, Roman politicians and soldiers, bystanders—and God answered that prayer by opening up the way of salvation even to Jesus' murderers.
- Jesus was suffering the most horrible, painful death ever devised by sinful man, and he looked at the people responsible for his suffering and prayed for their forgiveness.
- What Jesus did and demonstrated for us on the cross, He's calling us to do the same for others **Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.**
- Having received His forgiveness, we must pass it on to others