

If that warning seems out of character with the loving Father who wants to forgive you, maybe we've forgotten that forgiving others is woven into the Lord's prayer, which begins with Our Father (Mat 6:12). We need to remember the verses at the end of and immediately following that prayer. (Mat 6:24-25)

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 NLT - 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ... 14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

On our own, we might choose to get even, seek revenge or hold a grudge when we are offended. But God doesn't want us held captive by such responses, He wants to break the cycle of unforgiveness, and proved that on the cross. The demonstration of our undeserved forgiveness is a powerful witness to the Kingdom of God.

When have you experienced, or heard of an act of undeserved forgiveness? What was your response and the responses you saw in others?

WRAP-UP

Undeserved forgiveness wasn't an easy thing for Jesus, it was painful and costly. Neither is it easy for us to forgive others. But when we recognize the great and costly gift of the forgiveness we have received, we are empowered to extend undeserved forgiveness to those who have offended us. And when we do, we are a compelling witness of God's love and His kingdom on earth.

MEMORY VERSE

... and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
- Matthew 6:12 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Take some time this week to quietly search your heart for unforgiveness that you harbor towards someone who has offended you. Ask God to forgive your unforgiveness, and then release them from that debt.

“Forgiveness: Received and Given”

7 A Lenten Series #1

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus hung upon the cross dying, he spoke seven times that were recorded in the gospel accounts. During this Lenten season as we reflect on Christ's suffering and sacrifice for our salvation, we will consider each of these seven phrases and what they mean to us as followers of Jesus. Together they reveal something about God's character, about us and about others. In the first statement He made Jesus asked the Father to forgive.

Key Verse

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Father, Forgive Them

After sharing one last supper with his disciples and washing their feet, Jesus was betrayed by Judas, arrested, and abandoned. He was tried and unjustly condemned, flogged and humiliated before being forced to carry the cross he would be crucified on. And from the pain of the cross, He looked over the crowd who put him there and prayed that they would be forgiven by the Father.

What is the response you would have expected from someone who had been so badly mistreated? If you or I or anyone else had been in this situation, what words might have been spoken instead of “Father forgive them”? What does this reveal about the heart of Jesus for the lost, and the Father towards his wayward children?

2. We need to receive forgiveness

It is easy for us to see the crowd who demanded that Pilate crucify Jesus as his enemy. They carried out the deed. They drove the nails in his flesh and hoisted him aloft. But Jesus' prayer for forgiveness extended far beyond that time and place. It reaches out to all of us who owe the debt of our sinfulness. If we have minimized our sin as "mistakes, slip ups, problems" then we really "don't know what we are doing", and we need only look at Isaiah's prophesy to realize the true cost of our sin.

Isaiah 53:6-11 NLT - 6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all. 7 He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. 8 Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. 9 He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. 10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands. 11 When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

What do we read in this passage that helps us realize our responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion, and our need for forgiveness?

Jesus not only asked the Father to forgive us, but he offered up himself as the payment for our debt to secure our forgiveness.

Romans 5:6-11 NLT - 6 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. 7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. 9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. 10 For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. 11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

Too often we have failed to recognize the good news that Jesus has made a way for our forgiveness and restored our relationship with God.

How do the passages from Isaiah and Romans refute these arguments to accepting God's forgiveness:

- I haven't done anything really bad that needs to be forgiven (Is 53:6)
- I am able to take care of my own guilt (Rom 5:6)
- God can't or won't forgive me (Rom 5:9)
- I am too ashamed to face the Father because of my sin (Is 53:11, Rom 5:10-11)

What can possibly prevent us from running to the cross with our unconfessed sin?

3. We need to forgive others

Forgiveness is costly and it isn't easy. When we receive forgiveness and truly recognize the magnitude of what we have been given, God releases His power in us to extend forgiveness to others. It requires us to fight against our natural tendencies and view those who have offended us through the eyes of Jesus on the cross. Peter recognized how difficult it was to forgive in his own strength when he asked Jesus if he had to forgive someone up to seven times. Jesus' reply must have certainly discouraged him from attempting this in his own power.

Matthew 18:21-22 NLT - 21 Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" 22 "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

And Jesus followed up this statement with the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35. In it the king forgave this man a great debt, but the servant refused to forgive a small debt owed him by his fellow servant.

What sobering warning did Jesus conclude the parable with?

Matthew 18:34-35 NLT - 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 35 "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."