

## Episode 9: Forgiveness Matters

One of the hardest aspects of being a Christian is learning to forgive those who have hurt or offended us. Sadly, some Christians never learn to forgive. We want to get even with neighbors, friends, and coworkers who have treated us badly. We jump on the failures of those who have hurt us. We hold grudges against real and perceived political enemies. Bottomline: forgiveness is HARD, and we can't forgive unless God helps us. But we'll also never forgive if we simply refuse to do it! Today, let's consider two passages that can help us to better understand the call each of us have received from God – the call to forgive.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

In the first passage, we read a clear message that Jesus gave His disciples – and us. Here it is again: “If you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Whoa! How does that sound to you? That sounds to me like our own forgiveness from God hinges on whether or not we forgive other people. In the second passage, Peter has clearly heard Jesus' message, but now, he's asking Jesus how often must he forgive. I understand why Peter asked about limits. Forgiveness is hard. Forgiving those who have hurt us isn't natural. And it's worse when someone continues to hurt us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote that forgiveness is a form of suffering. With forgiveness, we give up our right to be treated better. We give up our right to be angry, our right to get even, our right to exact revenge. That's a lot to give up! But forgiveness is also a way to share in the sufferings of Jesus. Peter must have learned this lesson because he would later write “Be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.” (1 Peter 4:13). Forgiveness glorifies God. Do you want to glorify God by forgiving? I know I do.

Let's forgive others when they do us wrong today...forgiveness matters to God, and glorifies Him! And that's really Good News.”

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