

How Often Should I Forgive?

“How often should I forgive?” Few questions rival this one in pertinence. Peter asked Jesus specifically. Some of us don’t bother to enquire about our need to pardon those who offend us. We assume God supports us when we carry grudges. “After all, someone wronged me. That person repeatedly acts rudely. I’m justified in my anger.”

Jesus’ answer to Peter’s query may be the most neglected of the Master’s teachings. Who of us doesn’t bear rancor toward someone? In many cases, we’ve carried the bitterness for years. With increasing resentment, we avoid the brother, sister, neighbor, parent, or child who hurt us. We refuse to talk to him or her. We want nothing to do with that offender.

If we carry long-term ill-will, we face three problems. First, Scripture advises: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger,” *Ephesians* 4: 26. Anger we carry past day’s end limits our physical and mental capacities. Second, we possibly failed to use Jesus’ instructions for dealing with those who offend us. Too many Christians flunk his wise guidelines in *Matthew* 18:15-20. Third, if we don’t forgive, we can’t expect God’s forgiveness. Are you sure you want to stay angry today, tonight, and a year from this Christmas? Want the superior way to deal with your enemies? Pray for God to bless them.



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