

I T ' S T I M E T O B E

# Selfish

## *about forgiving others*

**H**ow many are good at being selfish? It comes naturally to us. We have been taught our entire lives to STOP BEING SELFISH—and, that is a correct teaching. The Bible teaches us to put others first and sacrifice ourselves. However, I believe there is one exception to this rule.

In our last session, we talked about the necessity of forgiving those that trespass against us. The question now is: HOW DO I FORGIVE SOMEONE THAT HAS DONE ME WRONG? Do I simply ignore them and/or pretend it didn't happen? Do I just avoid that person in the future hoping they don't do it again? What exactly is forgiveness?

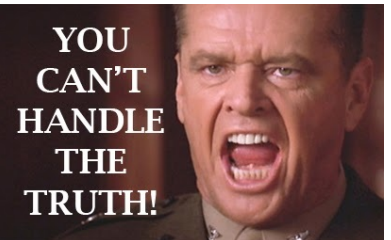
This lesson will talk about what TRUE FORGIVENESS actually means. We will discuss HOW TO ACHIEVE FORGIVENESS and HOW TO BE FREE from the bitterness and anger that results when we fail to forgiveness those that have hurt us.

### 1. CAN'T I JUST FORGET ABOUT IT?

A. Can we all admit that we are good at IGNORING stuff? It might be stuff at home, at school, or even at your job. Something is expected of you and yet you procrastinate, put-off, forget, or simply try to ignore until it goes away. However, it never really goes away. It's still there waiting for your attention.

B. When we try and ignore *actually forgiving* those that have trespassed us, we are essentially saying: I CAN HANDLE THIS ON MY OWN.

- 1) By failing to forgive, we are actually setting ourselves up for MORE HURT and ultimately ANGER and BITTERNESS.
- 2) The truth of the matter is this (imagine my best "A FEW GOOD MEN" Jack Nicholson voice), *"You can't handle the truth!"*
- 3) The truth is this: If you ignore a trespass, you haven't forgiven the trespass. It's still alive and well in your heart.
- 4) Last week we talked about the fact that your ♥HEART is where everything in your life originates from.



♥HEART (definition) – It is the seat of all your emotions, will, dreams, and actions.

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## 2. YOU'RE A DIRT BAG.

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A. Have you ever been called a *dirt bag*? You probably didn't realize they were actually quoting a scripture to you. Am I saying that God thinks you are a bag of dirt? Yes, that's exactly what I am saying.

1. PSALM 103:14, *"For He knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust."*
  - » You're probably thinking that must be a typo, or an illustration, surely God doesn't think we are dirt.

B. Let's read GENESIS 2:7, *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*

1. Now I know all the women are thinking: "Yeah, it's true. Men are dirt bags."
2. But the fact is that *women are made out of dirt as well.*

C. Let's read GENESIS 2:21,22, *"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman..."*

1. My mom, Sara Mae Kramer, used to say to my dad, Samuel Kramer: *"I'm made out of better stuff than you. You were made out of dirt, I was made from a rib!"*



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## 3. MY HEART FULL OF DIRT.

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A. Let's talk about our heart for a moment. Here you see a clay pot full of dirt. Imagine that pot represents your heart. And, imagine that dirt is actually MIRACLE-GRO SOIL. That dirt is the *good stuff*....if you plant something in there—it will grow! The dirt is **FERTILE** which means: *capable of producing and sustaining abundant plant growth.*

- 1) In other words, if you plant a seed in that soil, it will grow.
- 2) **LESSON #1: Don't ever allow a seed of bitterness to be planted in your heart.**



B. This is exactly what Jesus was talking about in the DAILY PRAYER He instructed us to pray.

- 1) What did Jesus tell us to do? *"If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you"* (MATTHEW 6:14, CEB).
- 2) Notice Jesus used the word *forgive*. What exactly does that word mean?

C. Our eternal salvation is based on Jesus forgiving us of our sins. What does the word *forgive* actually mean? In the Biblical context, to forgive means:

- 1) **TO PARDON** – When someone is pardoned, they are officially forgiven and do not have to fulfill the sentence that was pronounced upon them for their offense.
- 2) **TO RELEASE** – The person is released from the penalty of sin (example: the prison sentence which resulted from the offense).
- 3) **TO CANCEL** – To cancel the debt that resulted because of the trespass/offense (example: restitution of money, or something as simple as *an apology* that someone feels they are owed).
- 4) **LET IT GO** – It involves a conscious decision to let go of resentment or vengeance toward someone who has wronged you.
- 5) **LET'S BE CLEAR** – If someone has abused you mentally, physically, or even sexually, you forgiving them **DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU HAVE TO INTERACT WITH THEM** or be friends with them. What it does mean is that you are not holding anything against them in your

heart. Consider ROMANS 16:17, *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”*

4. **LET'S SIMPLIFY IT:** If you don't forgive someone who has trespassed against you, you are **PLANTING A SEED** in the Miracle-Gro pot of soil (which is your heart).

- 1) **I PROMISE YOU THAT IF YOU ALLOW A SEED TO REACH THAT SOIL IN OUR HEART IT WILL PRODUCE A WEED OF BITTERNESS IN YOUR LIFE.** And, that weed will produce **ROOTS** and later **BITTERNESS** that will make your life harder.
- 2) The Bible talks about this process in HEBREWS 12:14,15: *“Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. **Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.**”*

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#### 4. YOU SAY, “I CAN MANAGE MY HEART. I CAN HANDLE THE BITTERNESS.”

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A. This whole situation can be handled effectively—and the bitterness completely removed from our heart—when we obey Jesus and daily forgive those that have trespassed against us. However, our flesh always thinks it has a better idea. Our heart tells us that we can **MANAGE THE BITTERNESS** and nobody will know.

- 1) That is an **OUTRIGHT LIE!**
- 2) If you have bitterness in your heart, believe me: **PEOPLE WILL KNOW IT!** You may not say it from your mouth, but it comes out in your actions, your mannerisms, your attitude, your eye-rolls, etc.!



B. There's a saying in the world that says, *“Follow your heart!”* Let me tell you right now: **Your heart will lead you straight to hell! Don't follow your heart, follow God's Word.**

- 1) Here's what God's Word says about our heart: *“The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?”* (Jeremiah 17:9).
- 2) I've watched people *follow their heart* and it destroyed their marriages, their family, and often their relationship with God.

C. If you tell yourself that **you don't need to forgive those that trespass against you** because you will simply *forget about it, or ignore it, or pretend it didn't happen*, you are allowing your heart to lead you astray.

- 1) The Bible tells us that God's ways are **HIGHER THAN OUR WAYS**. In other words, God knows what is best for us. He's the One who created us, He knows how our mind/heart works.
- 2) **GOD SAYS: “The only way to get rid of a trespass is TO FORGIVE THE ONE WHO TRESPASSED AGAINST YOU!”**

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#### 5. THEY ARE NOT WORTH IT.

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A. When Satan uses someone to hurt or trespass against you—that's bad enough. However, when we allow a **SEED OF BITTERNESS** to become planted in the Miracle-Gro soil of our heart, I think Satan laughs at us. Not only did he pull one over on us, he's got us bound up for life.

- 1) I beg you today: **DON'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN TO YOU.** Be selfish about forgiving others.



- 2) What does that mean? It means **PUT YOUR NEEDS FIRST!** Don't allow that person and trespass to become rooted in your heart—no matter what they did to you. **Don't give them that power over you.** They are not worth you going to Hell because you couldn't forgive them!
- 3) If Jesus can forgive the very people who were crucifying Him—while they were actually doing it—then you and I can forgive the person WHO HURT/TRESPASSED AGAINST US.

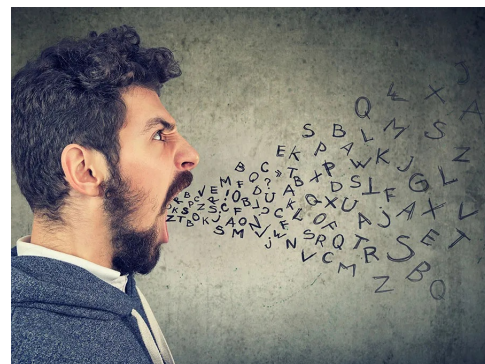
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## 6. HOW DO I PRAY A PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS?

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### A. The first question is: Do I have unforgiveness against someone in my heart? How can I know?

- 1) THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: What is coming out of my mouth?
- 2) What happens when I hear someone say their name? Do I immediately remember what they did to me and have a NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL REACTION? That tells me I still have unforgiveness in my heart.



### B. One of the best ways to begin the process of FORGIVING OTHERS is to remind ourselves of WHAT WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN OF.

- 1) It's so easy for us to be judgmental of others. How could they do this to me? How could they say that about me? Why are they so mean?
- 2) When I want to become judgmental of others I am always reminded of how ROTTEN I have been in my life. I often call myself a REPEAT OFFENDER. I have sinned—even when I knew better.
- 3) If we can admit our own pitfalls and realize the MERCY THAT GOD HAS EXTENDED to us—then we can more quickly SHOW THAT MERCY to those who have trespassed against us.
- 4) The truth is that I DON'T DESERVE TO BE FORGIVEN—it is an act of mercy from a loving God. With that in mind, I can allow that same loving God to work through me when I forgive those that have done me wrong—even when THEY DON'T DESERVE IT!
- 5) Another aspect that I am reminded of—when people do bad things and trespass me—is this: I wonder what happened in their life to make them act that way? Maybe they were abused by their parents. Maybe they have never experienced love the way that God intended. Maybe they are hurting thus causing them to lash out at me. If Jesus can love me with all my issues, then I can love others as well (because Jesus lives inside of me and helps me).

### C. SAMPLE PRAYER: *“(Name of trespasser), I forgive you for yelling at me. I forgive you for belittling me and embarrassing me. I know that you are a person created in God's image and I choose to forgive you this day. Amen.”*

- 1) After you finish that prayer, I recommend you say the following prayer as well: *“Father God, please forgive me for judging/hating (Name of trespasser). I recognize that I allowed a seed of bitterness to be planted in my heart. Father, as I yank that seed/weed out of my heart, I pray that you will fill that void with your Holy Spirit and love. Help me to love others as You have loved me. I pray all of this in your holy Name. Amen.”*
- 2) If you have been harboring hatred/judgment against someone who trespassed you for years, **it may take some time for that root/weed to die in your heart.** If you start to see those old feelings/resentment rise back up, simply repeat the prayer of forgiveness again (as many times as necessary) until that weed/bitterness dies.

**BE SELFISH ABOUT FORGIVING OTHERS-DO IT FOR YOURSELF!**