

Summary

In this sermon, the pastor explores the topic of forgiveness by examining what Jesus actually said versus what we often assume or wish He had said. Drawing from Matthew 6 and the Lord's Prayer, the message highlights that Jesus directly connects receiving God's forgiveness with our willingness to forgive others. The pastor is honest about his own struggles with forgiveness, acknowledging that most of us would rather hold on to offenses than extend grace to those who have hurt us. The core message is that unforgiveness is a prison, and the only key that unlocks that prison is forgiveness. Forgiveness is not about excusing wrong behavior, letting someone off the hook, or pretending the pain did not happen. It is about setting yourself free from the burden of bitterness and resentment. The pastor challenges the group to start with a willingness to pray, even when they do not feel like it, trusting that God can bring them to a place of genuine forgiveness and freedom.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today as a group of people who are works in progress. We ask that You open our hearts and minds to what You want to speak to us today. Where there is hurt, bring healing. Where there is pride, bring humility. Where there is unforgiveness, bring a willingness to let go. Lord, we do not want to simply discuss forgiveness as a concept. We want to experience the freedom that comes from truly walking it out. Have Your way in our conversation today, and may everything we share point us closer to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing someone did for you recently that you were genuinely grateful for, even if it was something small?

Key Verses

- Matthew 6:9-15
- Matthew 18:21-22
- Matthew 5:23-24
- Matthew 5:43-44

- Colossians 3:13

Questions

- When you heard the topic of forgiveness today, was there a person or situation that immediately came to mind? Without sharing details you are not comfortable with, what did that moment feel like?
- The pastor pointed out that Jesus directly links receiving God's forgiveness with forgiving others in Matthew 6:14-15. How does that connection challenge or encourage you personally?
- Peter suggested forgiving someone seven times, which probably felt generous to him. Why do you think we naturally want to put a limit on how many times we forgive someone?
- The pastor described unforgiveness as a prison where the person holding the grudge is actually the one locked up. Have you ever experienced that kind of emotional or spiritual captivity? What did it feel like?
- The sermon made the point that forgiveness is not about excusing wrong behavior or telling someone they were right when they were wrong. How does that reframe the way you think about forgiving someone who has genuinely hurt you?
- The pastor suggested starting with a prayer that is honest, even something like, 'God, I do not want to pray for this person, but I know You are telling me to.' How does that kind of raw, honest prayer feel compared to what you might think prayer is supposed to sound like?
- Colossians 3:13 says to forgive as the Lord forgave you. Thinking about how freely God has forgiven you, how does that change your perspective on forgiving someone who, in your opinion, does not deserve it?
- The pastor asked how many homes, marriages, and friendships could be healed if people simply chose to forgive. Is there a relationship in your life right now where taking a step toward forgiveness could bring healing? What is one small step you could take this week?

Life Application

This week, identify one person or situation where you have been holding on to unforgiveness. You do not have to have it all figured out. Start simply by praying about it, even if your prayer sounds like, 'God, I am still hurt and I do not feel ready, but I am willing to be willing.' Commit to praying for that person or situation every day this week, and pay attention to how God begins to work in your heart as you do.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus directly connects receiving God's forgiveness with our willingness to forgive others, making forgiveness not optional but central to our faith.
- Unforgiveness is a prison that traps the person holding the grudge, not the one who caused the hurt. Forgiveness is the key that unlocks that prison.
- Forgiveness does not mean excusing wrong behavior or pretending the pain did not happen. It means releasing the burden so that you can walk in freedom.
- We do not have to feel ready to forgive before we start. Beginning with an honest, willing prayer is the most God-honoring place to start.
- Because God has forgiven us an infinite debt we did not deserve, we are called to extend that same unearned grace to others, no matter how difficult that may feel.

Ending Prayer

Lord, we thank You for this time together and for the truth of Your Word. We confess that forgiveness is hard, and that many of us are carrying burdens today that we were never meant to carry alone. We ask that You give us the courage to let go of the rope, to stop fighting battles that are keeping us in chains. Where we are not yet ready, make us willing. Where we are willing, give us strength. Remind us that the same grace You have poured out on us is the grace You are asking us to pour out on others. Set us free, Lord, so that we can live fully on mission for You. In the name of Jesus, amen.