

Discipleship Lesson 18

Forgiveness

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” -- C. S. Lewis

“Whenever I see myself before God and realize something of what my blessed Lord has done for me at Calvary, I am ready to forgive anybody anything. I cannot withhold it. I do not even want to withhold it.” -- Martyn Lloyd-Jones

“No prayers can be heard which do not come from a forgiving heart.” -- J. C. Ryle

“You are nothing better than deceitful hypocrites if you harbor in your minds a single unforgiving thought. There are some sins which may be in the heart, and yet you may be saved. But you cannot be saved unless you are forgiving. If we do not choose to forgive, we choose to be damned.”

-- Charles Spurgeon

INTRODUCTION

It is absolutely essential that followers of Christ forgive those who sin against them. The basic idea of forgiveness is “to release a debt.” In other words, if we consider all the evil actions of those who wrong us as a debt they owe us, to forgive them is to cancel that debt, so they are released from ever having to pay us back.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Matthew 6:9-15.

- How does Jesus teach us we are to pray for our own forgiveness (vs.12)?
- What does Jesus mean in verses 14-15? Is Jesus teaching that a person will obtain salvation if they forgive others? Consult Eph. 2:8-9 and Titus 3:4-7.
- How important is it for us to forgive others, according to Jesus?

2. Read Matthew 18:21-35.

- How often must we forgive someone who sins against us? What did Jesus mean by saying “up to seventy times seven”?

- Who does the servant who owed 10,000 talents represent in this parable (vs.24)?
 - Who does the slave who owed the servant 100 denarii represent?
 - What is the point of this parable (vs.32-35)?
 - What should you meditate on the next time you need to forgive someone?
3. Read Ephesians 4:30 - 5:2.
- According to vs. 32, what should you consider when you know you need to forgive someone?
 - What evil fruits are likely to be in your life, if you refuse to forgive others (vs.31)?
 - What will a spirit of unforgiveness in your life do to the Holy Spirit who dwells in you (vs.30)?

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Do you think that we are only obligated to forgive those who apologize to us or repent, because God only forgives those who repent (Rom.2:5)? Or do you believe we should forgive all who wrong us? Why do you believe the way you do?
2. Does God's command for us to forgive us mean we must forget that it ever happened, or trust the person to the same extent in the future? For example, if a family relative had been sexually abusing your small child, though you must forgive him, would you trust that family member to be alone with your child? Give reasons for why you believe as you do.

STEPS TO TAKE

1. Take some time to think and pray about whether there is anyone that has done harm to you that you have not forgiven. If so, confess these situations to your discipling partner. Pray together, releasing that person from any debt to you before God.
2. Memorize Eph. 4:32.
3. Recite Phil. 2:3-5 to your discipling partner.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Additional Scripture you may want to memorize: Matthew 6:14-15.

BEFORE YOUR NEXT SESSION

1. Memorize Eph. 4:32. Work on this verse until you can repeat it perfectly. Remember to recite the reference as well as the content of the verse.
2. Read through your next study and answer the questions. If you have questions or become confused, write your questions down so that you can discuss them with your discipling partner at your next session.
3. Continue to cultivate the spiritual disciplines of reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on Scripture, as well as prayer. Seek to do these disciplines as a means to enjoy and delight in God, not as raw duties to be endured. Look at these studies as a way for you to develop your loving, obedient relationship with God.