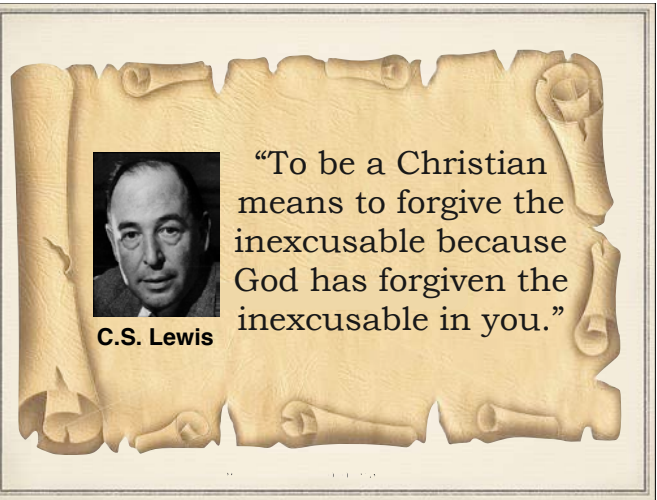


“Any fool knows men and women think differently at times, but the biggest difference is this.

Men forget,
but seldom forgive;
women forgive,
but seldom forget.”

Robert Jordan



The challenge of forgiving

- Why is it so hard to forgive others who have hurt us?
- What are the obstacles that hinder us?
- How can we deal with them?

Matthew 18

“²¹ Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ ²² Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ ²⁷ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.’”

Contrasting responses

The Grateful Master	The Ungrateful Servant
Had a just claim	Had a just claim
Was asked for patience	Was asked for patience
Showed compassion	Showed no compassion
Forgave the debt	Demanded full payment
Suffered the loss of the outstanding debt.	Refused to absorb any loss

Observations

- The context - The question is asked - How many times are we to forgive?
- Jesus is addressing the disciple’s heart not the offender’s heart.
- Forgiveness assumes the offender’s acknowledgement of responsibility.
- God’s grace to us should inspire our grace to others.
- It is possible to receive the first and not give the second.

- What goes around comes around.
- Jesus appeals to cognitive (logic) not emotional (feelings).
- This teaching is repeated often in the New Testament.

Prov. 24:17	1 Cor. 4:12-13
Matt. 5:39-48; 6:12-15	Eph. 4:32
Luke 6:35-37; 17:3-4	Col. 3:13
Rom. 12:14-21	1 Pet. 3:9

Obstacles to forgiveness

- Refusing to respect justice.
- Refusing to see beyond our personal pain.
- Refusing to accept the freedom (power) to forgive.
- Refusing to close the account.

Refusing to demand justice.

“That’s OK. Just forget it.”

- We are hardwired for justice.
- Our inner heart & God keep score and demand closure to injustice.
- Bitterness will develop a root.

Hebrews 12

“¹⁴ Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no **root of bitterness** springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;”

Two great blasphemies in our culture

- Tolerance is demanded when the preferences of man replace the ethics of God.
- Forgiveness is divorced from sacrifice and repentance.

Refusing to see beyond our pain.

“I will not be treated this way.”

- We can be blinded to the big picture by our sense of personal injustice.

Philippians 2

“³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ **do not merely look out for your own personal interests**, but also for the interests of others.”



Our pain leads us to the Cross,
which grants us the Spirit,
who blesses us with personal peace
& as social peacemakers.

Refusing to accept the freedom (power) to forgive.

“Forgiveness is a choice I have the power to make.”

- God’s Spirit indwells people not events.
- The power of God’s Spirit is in our response to life’s challenges more than our control of life’s circumstances.

1 Corinthians 13

“⁴ Love is **patient**, love is **kind**, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not **seek its own**, is not **provoked**, does not **take into account a wrong suffered**, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ **bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**”

- **Note that love is a response to injustice, not just an initiation of justice.**

Corrie ten Boom



“Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”

Refusing to close the account.

“I may forgive but you still owe me.”

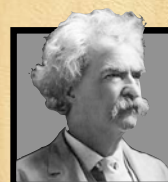
- **Forgiveness will cost the forgiver something.**
- **Forgiveness is God’s way of bringing just closure to the penitent sinner’s account by suffering the loss Himself.**

Injustice

I pay

Someone else pays

Closure



Mark Twain

“Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”



Lewis Smedes

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

Luke 17

“3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and **if he repents, forgive him.** 4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

- **Forgiveness is linked to:**

**Justice,
Repentance,
& Grace.**

Forgiving without repentance?

- Reconciliation requires closure on both sides of a conflict.
- Pardon before or without penitence may free the offended but it does not close the books on the injustice or liberate the offender.
- Repentance brings closure only in the context of the Grace of God and the Cross of Christ.

Are you prepared to forgive?

1. Are you expecting closure without justice?
2. Can you see beyond your hurt?
3. Do you walk in the freedom to forgive?
4. Are you willing to close the account?

What can I do to change?

1. Refuse to repress injustice - forgive or seek restitution.
2. Take your baptism seriously - It's not all about you anymore.
3. Walk in spiritual power - forgiving is a choice you have the power to make.
4. Be willing to suffer the loss and close the file.

**Bitterness
is like drinking poison
and hoping the other
person dies.**

**If you want peace,
seek justice! GOD'S
WAY!**

