



Cornerstone
CHURCH

Follow Jesus in the Stories He Told

The Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor

Pastor Mark Lehmann
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Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven! Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.”

Matthew 18:21-35 NLT

Why Forgiveness is Central to the Christian Life

We Forgive Because We Have Been Forgiven

“If Jesus forgave those who nailed Him to the cross, and if God forgives you and me, how can you withhold your forgiveness from someone else?”

Anne Graham Lotz

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32 ESV

Forgiveness Reflects God’s Character

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Psalms 103:8 NIV

What Forgiveness is and What It is Not

“Forgiveness is manifested mercy; it is love in action – not love based on a feeling, but love based on a decision, an intentional choice to obey God.”

Joyce Meyer

- Forgiveness is a decision to release someone from the debt they owe you – because our Lord Jesus has released us from a far greater debt.
- Forgiveness is not ignoring justice or pretending the hurt never happened. Forgiveness frees you from the poison of bitterness while leaving ultimate justice to God.

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
Romans 12:19 NIV

The Danger of an Unforgiving Heart

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."
Matthew 6:12-15 NIV

When We Refuse to Forgive

- It Becomes a Barrier in Our Relationship with God

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."
Matthew 6:14-15 NLT

- It Fuels Bitterness

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.
Hebrews 12:15 NLT

- It Contradicts the Gospel of God's Grace and Forgiveness We Claim to Believe

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."
Mark 11:25 NIV

How to Forgive Like Jesus

1. Remember the Cross
2. Pray for Those Who Hurt You

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

Luke 6:27-28 NIV

Jesus said “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Luke 23:34 NIV

3. Forgive Them

Living As a Forgiven People Who Follow Jesus

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

C.S. Lewis

God expects His mercy to flow through us, not stop with us.

“You will never forgive anyone more than God has already forgiven you.”

Max Lucado