

Forgiveness = “Let It Go”

Releasing Others

When we do something wrong we can say sorry to God or to other people. But, what do we do when someone does something wrong against us? The word “forgiveness” in the Bible means to “release” or simply “let go.” In life, it is rare to receive an apology even though it’s natural for offenses and hurts to arise, but in order to have healthy relationships we will need to decide to “let go,” even if people don’t apologize to us. The Bible teaches us to forgive others just as we have received forgiveness from God.

Jesus’ Story About Forgiving Others

Matthew 18:21 (NIV)

(21) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

Why do you think Peter asked Jesus this question?

Matthew 18:27 (NIV)

(27) The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Why did the king forgive the man’s debt?

Matthew 18:32-33 (NIV)

(32) “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.
(33) Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’

What was wrong with what the man did?

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)

(21) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”
(22) Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.
(23) “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.
(24) As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him.
(25) Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.
(26) “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’
(27) The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.
(28) “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.
(29) “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’
(30) “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.
(31) When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.
(32) “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.
(33) Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’
(34) In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.
(35) “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

What was Jesus trying to teach Peter?

Why Should We Forgive Others?

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

(14) For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
(15) But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

What is the relationship between God forgiving us and we forgiving of others?

Read Luke 6:37-38, Romans 12:17-19, Hebrews 10:30

Luke 6:37-38 (NIV)

(37) “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
(38) Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Romans 12:17-19 (NIV)

(17) Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.

(18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

(19) 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.

Hebrews 10:30 (NIV)

(30) For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."

Why should we never judge others or take revenge?

Luke 23:34 (NIV)

(34) Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

How can we follow Jesus' example?

Let It Go

Mark 11:25 (NIV)

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

How does unforgiveness affect or limit our own lives?

What are some of the things that we "hold on" to, that we need to let go?

Colossians 3:12-13 (NIV)

(12) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

(13) Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

How can this verse help us to forgive other people?

Ask a Friend

Can you share a story of forgiving someone?

Why and how did you forgive that person?

How did this help you?

Application

How do we forgive someone?

What steps should we take to change our thinking and our actions?

Pray and ask God to help you forgive as often as you need to.

Prayer Model

Lord Jesus, I thank you for forgiving me. And now I forgive and release anyone who has hurt me. Please help to bless those people. I thank you that you heal my heart and release me from any hurt or bitterness.

Key Verse

Colossians 3:13

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."