

# The Rest of Forgiveness

06 - The Art of Rest  
Church on the Park | Sunday, 31 August 2014

**Text:** Matthew 5:7

**Theme:** Forgiveness helps us enter into God's supernatural rest

**Intro:** The last few weeks we've been talking about the obstacles that keep us from true rest. We've covered the obstacles of pride and unbelief. This week I want to focus on removing the **obstacle of unforgiveness**.

**A Story:** There was a man who owed around \$100,000 to the council and the Australian Tax Office. After many years, there was no way he could pay the debt, so they planned to take his house and all his assets away. He went to Maurice Blackburn ("we fight for fair") who then brought his case before a judge. Because he had a wife and two kids, he pleaded with the judge, crying that he would be able to keep his house for the sake of his family. The judge had compassion on him and completely gave him a clean state. "Now," he said, "You've got a second chance, don't screw it up!" He told him he wouldn't. It was a couple of months later and he was walking down the Queen St. Mall. While walking, he saw an old friend that owed him \$20 for dinner. He went up to him, they began talking and he brought up the \$20 dollars to him. "Hey mate," his friend responded, "I'm doing it tough right now, I can't give it to you today, but I will when I get paid." "No mate!" he demanded, "I need it now!" The man got worked up into such a fury that he began choking his old friend that owed him money. A police officer saw what was happening, broke it up and the man who owed \$20 decided to press charges on his old friend for assault and attempted murder. Well, the man who had his slate wiped clean went to the court again, and guess what? He appeared before the same judge. Guess what happened this time?

## 1) The reason why we forgive others is because God first forgave us

- The above story is a **modernized** version of Jesus' story in **Matthew 18:21-35**
- Let's notice a few things about this parable:
  - First, because the man **wouldn't forgive** he was handed over to **tormentors**. In other words, he was **tortured**.
    - If you don't forgive you end up being tormented but inwardly and outwardly. Consequently, you **cannot** enter into God's **rest**. Unforgiveness is an **obstacle** to true rest, but forgiveness enables us to enter God's rest.
  - Second, this is forgiveness between **brothers** in the Lord. There two kinds of forgiveness we need to exercise. One is between **brothers** and the other is between **enemies**. I want to make a distinction between the two and explain the differences later on in this message. The enemy loves to **separate** brothers through **offenses**, and especially to separate us from good **pastors** and **leaders**.
  - Third, forgiveness is meant to be **continuous**, that is **infinite**. Peter said, "seven times." Jesus responded, "Seventy times seven."
- Now, let's get back to our first point: the **reason** we forgive others is because God first forgave us.
- Knowing **how much** Jesus has forgiven us and how many **times** he has forgiven us will put things into the **right perspective**. Let's look at another story: **Luke 7:36-50**

- Romans 5:6-10: Christ **died** for us while we were still his **enemies**
- On the **cross** he said, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)
  - Remember, Jesus forgave before people on the cross **before** they repented. And he is our example.
- What **enables** us to forgive is **experiencing** the awesome **love** of the Father toward us. That’s the **foundation** and **fountain** for all forgiving. Because we have been forgiven we know how to forgive.
- Jesus dealt with the issue of forgiveness straight after teaching the **Lord’s prayer**. Unforgiveness is one of the biggest reasons prayers are **not heard**. Matt. 6:14-15
- It’s **hypocrisy** to ask God for forgiveness if we are not willing to forgive others. Again, look at the Lord’s prayer.

## 2) Forgiveness must be deep from the heart (Matt. 18:35)

- Now, I’d like to focus on the **practicalities** of forgiveness
- Forgiveness is often **multi-layered**. The **depths** of our hearts are much more **affected** and **sensitive** than we know. We **bury** pain. We **forgive** but then realize we are still **hurt** and **offended**.
- Forgiving **once** in our heart, is **not usually enough**. We must **keep forgiving until** the anger and bitterness is gone.
  - You may let go of an offense one day and pick it up on another day.
- My **personal example** of when a good friend betrayed me in church. This hurt us financially and every time I couldn’t pay a bill or didn’t have much money for food, I was angry at this person again.
- To properly forgive we need to let the **Holy Spirit into** the **depths** of our hearts. Let him in and search your **heart** and **heal** your heart (Rom. 5:5)
- Each **situation** of forgiveness is **unique**. No **teaching** can fully help you. You need the **Holy Spirit** to **guide** you through the **process** and to work deeply **within**.

## 3) Ultimately, you don’t need to just forgive someone, but have the Father’s heart toward them. (1 John 4:1-21; 3:9-24)

- God wants you to see every person in your life through his **eyes**.
  - Somebody **sinning** against you is a **sign** that they **need** a **transformative encounter** with Jesus.
  - Jesus **died** for **everyone**.
- Like I said before there is two kinds of **operations** of forgiveness. One towards a **sincere brother** in the Lord and the other towards an **enemy** of God.
  - And here is where we need to separate the difference between **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**.
    - You can forgive **anyone**, but you **can’t** necessarily be **reconciled** to anyone unless they **repent** and show forth the **fruits** of repentance.
- Let’s take an extreme example of a **murderer**. You need to forgive them, but you don’t need to be reconciled to them. **Reconciliation** is for sincere **brothers** and sisters in Christ.
  - You can forgive the vilest of sinners, but you shouldn’t **trust** someone until they are **trustworthy**. That means they must bear **fruit** of **genuine change**.
- But no matter what, it’s important to have the **Father’s heart** towards everyone who comes to your mind.
- Forgiveness takes the matter **out** of your hands and heart, and puts it into God’s hands and heart. It **releases** you from needing revenge and personal vindication. Forgiveness is **letting go and letting God**.

**Conclusion:** We'll end with some practical points on how to forgive: Forgiveness is done before God in prayer. 1) Mention the persons name 2) State their offense(s) 3) Tell God you forgive them 4) Ask God to heal you. Later: 1) Ask for the Father's heart for them 2) Pray that God works in their lives 3) Ask God for help to continue to forgive 4) If they are a sincere brother seek reconciliation 5) If they are an enemy of God, consider sharing the Gospel with them.

#### END NOTES

Isaiah saw the Lord and realized his sinfulness even though he was a preacher of the Word. God put this episode of Isaiah seeing the Lord in the sixth chapter, not the first, for a reason.