

“How To Forgive?”

Luke 17:3-10; Romans 12:17-21

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- Illustration from the life of Joseph
- Forgiveness is a gracious decision not to hold the offense over the head of the offender but to release the offense. It is a gift.
- Why forgive?
 - We've been forgiven much.
 - We forgive in order to be forgiven by our heavenly Father.
 - We forgive to free up God to work in the offender.

How to Forgive?

A. Forgiveness is NOT based on FEELINGS or even FAITH, but an ACT OF OBEDIENCE.

1. **We do not need to FEEL the offense before we can forgive.**
 - a. We are commanded in Scripture to forgive.
 - Mark 11:25-26-- *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”*
 - b. We can forgive whether the person comes in confession or not.
 - c. We are commanded to forgive the repeat offender.
 - Luke 17:3-4-- *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”*
2. **We do not need supernatural FAITH in order to forgive.**
 - Luke 17:5-- *“And the disciples said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.”*
 - Luke 17:6 -- *“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea’, and it would obey you.”*
3. **We just need to “DO IT”.**
 - Luke 17:7-10 -- *“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”*

B. Forgiveness is a PROCESS of

1. SEPARATING the OFFENSE from the OFFENDER

- a. Biblical examples
 - 1) God the Father separates our sin from us.
 - Psalm 103:12-- *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*
 - 2) Jesus Christ separated the offense from the offender—and offered forgiveness.
 - Luke 23:34 -- *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*
 - 3) Peter separated the offense of crucifying the Lord from the offender.

- Acts 3:13-15-- *"The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses."*
 - Acts 3:17 -- *"Yet now brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers."*
- b. In separating the offense from the offender we understand that the offender is spiritually ignorant as to what they are doing, and that the offense is the result of the old sin nature that resides within.
- Romans 7:15-20 -- *"For what I am doing, I do not understand For what I will to do that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if it is no longer what I will to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."*
- c. In separating the offense from the offender does not mean that the offender is not culpable for their actions or sin. They are still responsible and accountable.
- Acts 3:19 -- *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."*

2. **GIVING the OFFENSE to GOD.**

- a. We cannot forgive sin, only God can.
- Luke 5:21-- *"Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*
 - Luke 5:24 -- *"you may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins!"*
- b. We give up the right to retaliate.
- c. We are not excusing the offense, but channeling it.

3. **FORGIVING the OFFENDER by LOVING THEM. -- Romans 12:17-21**

- a. One characteristic of sincere Christian love is forgiving others
- Romans 12:17-21-- *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regards for good things in the sight of all men . If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*
- b. Illustration from the life of Joseph
- Genesis 45:5, 7-8a-- *"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save you by a great deliverance. So not it is not you who sent me here, but God."*
 - Genesis 50:15-21-- *"said, 'Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.' So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, 'Before your father died he commanded, saying, "Thus you shall say to Joseph: 'I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.'" Now, please forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' Joseph said to them. 'Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."*
- c. Because forgiveness is a process, and -- not a one-time act, we might need to continually give the offense over to the LORD