



When It's Hard To Forgive Again

Passage: *Matthew 18: 21-35*

Key Verses: *"Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Vs.21-22*

"I'm sorry for being mean today," the little one says. Sissy replies: "It's ok. I was mean too. And I'm sorry."

They laugh, hug and turn on their music: *"You make everything gloorious, I am Yooooours!"* They sing and dance together.

Sitting at my desk and smiling ear to ear, I heard God whisper in my soul: *"They bless my heart."*

Forgiveness...

Is there anything harder to break through, more difficult to master, than asking for and extending forgiveness?

I think not.

And yet, it's evident that those who forgive have a richer, more peaceful life than those who hold grudges or those who are too prideful to admit when they're wrong.

Yes, I firmly believe that forgiveness is one of the keys to an abundant life.

On the other hand, lack of forgiveness is the reason behind much of the world's stress and misery.

As you turn on the TV, you'll see that revenge is idealized as the pinnacle of success. Turning the other cheek? Nope. "Revenge belongs to ME", the world cries out.

But what about us, Jesus followers? How do we respond to repeated offenses?

“Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” v.21

Let’s be honest. We can relate to Peter. As a matter of fact, our dear apostle thought he was being *“extra spiritual”* when he asked the Lord if forgiving seven times was enough. After all, he had heard Jewish rabbis teach that forgiving the same offender three times was sufficient.

Jesus exposed the true issue behind this concept: Peter was holding a forgiveness meter. His words showed that he intended to measure up the injuries done to him. When the measure was full, he would be allowed to avenge the wrong doing. Therefore he still thought of himself as a judge somewhat, when God tells us that *“there’s only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy...”* James 4:12 a

“Seven times seven”, Jesus said.

Seven. The number that represents completion. Perfection. Righteousness revealed.

Is there anything more righteous than extending grace and forgiveness to the undeserving? Is there anything more Christ-like than saying: *“It’s ok... I’ve been mean too. I forgive you.”*

Just as my daughter told her little sister...

Or will we do as the slave in the parable, whose huge debt was completely forgiven by his Master, and yet, was unable to extend the same forgiveness to his fellow slave. The measure of his debt couldn’t compare to the amount his friend owed him. In today’s money, his Master had forgiven him a debt equivalent to over \$10,000,000 . A fortune! His friend owed him about \$15. Still, he would not forgive him.

Sounds ridiculous, right?

And it is. Yet, Jesus’ message rings with the intensity of the meaning behind this parable: How dare we withhold a smudge of grace from our brothers and sisters, when we were lavished by grace through His precious blood!

No, it’s not easy. I don’t claim it to be. But forgiveness is not an option. It’s a demand. We must forgive, lest we impair our connection with the Father. He can’t extend grace when we withhold it from our neighbor. The Bible is filled with reminders of that truth. (*Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Luke 6:37; Romans 12:19*)

“Will you forgive again?” God asks.

What should our answer be?

A twelve year old reminded me today:

"Yes, it's ok. I've been mean too. I forgive you."

"How many times?"

Seven times seven... Forever... Completely...

Enough to become more like Jesus.

Verses to Meditate Upon:

"But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too." Mark 11:25 (NLT)

"Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing." 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

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