



As We Forgive Others

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“As we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12, KJV). This phrase of the Lord’s Prayer is probably the most challenging for us to speak. Forgiving other persons when they have wronged us is one of the most difficult tasks we have as followers of Christ. Yet this is exactly what we are called to do!

When we have been wronged

Being a Christian is rather easy when things are going well and when we are on good terms with everyone. Friendliness, kindness, and love are easy to express when there has been no disagreement. But what happens when someone says something or does something that hurts us? How do we feel when we have been wronged or injured? How do we respond when we have been treated unjustly?

Many times our anger flares up. We begin looking for ways to retaliate and get revenge. We have been hurt and we are determined to do something about it.

Most of us, on occasion, have felt wronged by another person. In our hurt and anger we begin to build a wall between ourselves and the other. It becomes hard to talk together or to look the person in the eye. As time goes on, we may even find it difficult to be civil. If the wrong is allowed to fester, then we may be consumed with bitterness. Our wounded pride may get the better of us.

But if we forgive this person, we are freed to be friends again. We can be at peace with one another as well as with ourselves. The wall is torn down and the door is opened to a renewed relationship.

God freely forgives us

Jesus is our best example of how we are to forgive others. Through the stories he told, such as that of the prodigal son, he teaches us the incredible depth of God’s love and forgiveness. In his offering forgiveness to other people—such as to the woman caught in adultery, and even to the ones who killed him—he modeled for us the forgiveness we are to show.

No matter how great the wrong that has been done to us, we are to forgive it. And not just once or twice, but if necessary, “seventy times seven.”

God offers us forgiveness freely. We cannot earn it. Nor is it deserved. Yet God offers it to us just the same. If we choose to accept God’s forgiveness, it takes away the barrier that separates us from God. It opens the way for reconciliation and renewed friendship.

If we choose to accept this forgiveness, it can produce within us a sincere readiness to forgive others. It can empower us to love and to forgive the person who has wronged us. God’s forgiveness of us can help us to forgive.

It may be difficult

Still, it is sometimes difficult to forgive another. If we have been hurt very badly it is hard to put aside the pain and anger we feel. It is hard to say, “I forgive you.” But we can ask God’s help in doing this. We can turn to God in prayer for the strength to say the words that will begin the healing process in a relationship.

Offering forgiveness can be a scary process. It makes us more vulnerable to the other person. But it can also break down the walls that divide us from that person. It can bridge the gap between us so that wounds can be healed and peace can be found.

God has shown us incredible love and mercy by offering us forgiveness. Assurance of God’s acceptance of us can help us pray with believers down through the centuries, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12, KJV).

Gracious God, help me remember that your loving forgiveness cannot be earned. You offer it to me freely, and it is up to me to accept it. Help me realize that I am to be forgiving in my relationships with others. Empower me to go now to the person who has wronged me, to forgive him or her so that healing can take place. Help me always to forgive others, as you have forgiven me. Amen.