Lesson Six – Forgiving Hearts

*“So likewise, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Matthew 18:35*

Having a forgiving heart is critical for several reasons. First, it is commanded by God and a condition of our own salvation (Matthew 6:14-15). But Forgiveness is also important to our own well-being. People who have learned how to forgive are happier. Withholding forgiveness not only hurts the offender, but may do more harm by harboring hatred, ill will, and bitterness which tend to destroy us.

1. **Defining what it means to forgive.**

Several Hebrew and Greek words are used to describe forgiveness:

1. **Old Testament:** To cover or blot out, to bear or take away, to pardon (used in reference to God forgiving sins.)
2. **New Testament:** To let loose, release, to send away, to remit, to bestow a favor unconditionally. A dismissal.

* Denotes primarily to forgive or remit debts, sins, the complete cancellation or the complete removal of the cause of the offense. To cover over. (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).
* The intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, lets go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, and has an increased ability to wish the offender well.

1. **God’s very nature is to be forgiving.**
2. The Lord’s proclamation: “…Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...” Exodus 34:5-8
3. God is good and ready to forgive. Psalm 86:5
4. He is rich in mercy. Ephesians 2:4-5
5. Paul— “Through Him forgiveness of sin is proclaimed to you.” Acts 13:38-39
6. **Bible examples of forgiveness.**

He who cannot forgive others destroys a bridge over which he himself must pass.

**–George Herbert**

1. Jacob and Esau. Genesis Chapters 25, 27-33
2. Joseph. Genesis Chapters 37- 50
3. The Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11-32
4. The adulterous woman. John 8:1-11
5. Jesus, our ultimate example. Luke 23:32-34
6. **Why does God ask us to have forgiving hearts?**
7. First, forgiving others is a command. Colossians 3:12-13
8. Christians are expected to go beyond what the world would do. Matthew 5:46-48
9. Jesus’ example compels us. Luke 23:32-34, Philippians 2:5, Ephesians 4:32
10. Because we have received forgiveness ourselves. Matthew 18:23-35, Ephesians 4:32
11. Satan takes advantage of us when forgiveness is delayed. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

**Question: What were the Apostle Paul’s concerns regarding the brother who had been disciplined at Corinth? (2 Corinthians 2:1-11)**

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1. **The most important consideration about forgiveness.**
2. True forgiveness must come from the heart. Matthew 18:35

**Question: Describe some situations where showing forgiveness is very difficult.**

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1. **Forgiving ourselves.**
2. “O wretched man that I am!” Romans 7:14-25

Forgiveness doesn’t excuse the behavior of others. Forgiveness prevents their behavior from destroying your heart.

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1. Our Father is rich in mercy and rich in grace. Ephesians 1:7-8, 2:4-7
2. God’s mercies are new every day. Lamentations 3:22-24
3. We must have hearts that look to the future. Philippians 3:12-14
4. **The joy of forgiveness.**
5. Forgiven people are happier people. Psalm 32 and Psalm 51
6. Christians must return good for evil, not evil for evil. Romans 12:17-21
7. God is able to make all things right on the last day. 1 Corinthians 4:5, Eccl 12:14