Forgiveness and Forgetting

Introduction:

1. Something that I need to do and have done for me.
2. Mark Twain once described forgiveness as “the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”
3. Let’s look at some principles today that will help us to grow in this area of Christian character.
4. HONESTY
   1. Dishonesty often hinders forgiveness on both the part of the offended and the offender.
      1. People at times may find themselves deceiving or trying to deceive:
         1. Themselves. 1 John 1:8
         2. God. 1 John 1:10; Acts 5:3,4
         3. Others. Ephesians 4:25
      2. God wants me to be honest with Him and with others. Psalm 51:6
   2. Honesty is essential in all parts of forgiveness.
      1. It begins with a real desire for a knowledge of truth about myself.

Psalm 139:23,24; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Corinthians 10:12; Matthew 5:8

* + 1. It continues with being honest with others, both in
       1. Confession of sins against others.
          1. “Oh, I didn’t mean that. Can’t you take a joke?” - or
          2. “Yes. I see that I hurt you. I’m sorry.”
       2. Confrontation of hurts others have inflicted, either intentionally or unintentionally on me.
          1. “No. There’s nothing wrong. I’m alright” (When there is really something wrong), or
          2. “Yes. You may not have thought, but what you did really hurt.”
          3. A confession with an “if” is not a confession.

“*If* I have hurt you, then I am sorry.”

“You did offend me.”

“*If* Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then I believe it,” is not a confession of Christ.

* + 1. Therefore, I want to be truthful – inside out – about my relationship with God, myself, and others.
       1. I look for the truth about my actions and intentions inside my heart. Psalm 51:6
       2. I am committed to express the truth to others.
          1. Accurately. Matthew 5:37
          2. At the best time. John 16:12
          3. In the best way. Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29

1. HUMILITY.
   1. I need to feel and express humility by not reading the other person’s mind and assuming that he knows what he needs to know to participate in the forgiveness process. Matthew 5:3
   2. Other people cannot read my mind; therefore, I want to be sure I tell them what is standing between us. 1 Corinthians 2:11
      1. I may not know I have hurt you unless you tell me; you may not know you have hurt me unless I tell you. Proverbs 27:5,6,17
      2. Good people many times are not aware of the hurt they have caused until they are told. 2 Samuel 12:1-9
         1. At least nine months had passed since David’s sin with Bathsheba.
         2. The child had already been born. 2 Samuel 11:26,27;

2 Samuel 12:14

* 1. I cannot read your mind; therefore, I will not know you are sorry and have repented unless you tell me; I cannot expect you to know I am sorry, why I am sorry, and the kind of sorrow I have unless I tell you. 2 Corinthians 7:10
     1. Some people substitute “good deeds” for expressing godly sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 7:16; Proverbs 25:16

* + - 1. Acting extra friendly, nice, sweet.
      2. Baking cakes and pies.
      3. Invitations to meals.
      4. Other gifts.
    1. God’s plan is when someone is sorry, say it, confess it; then we will know what our actions mean. James 5:16; 1 John 1:9

1. FORGIVING EACH OTHER AND ACCEPTING FORGIVENESS IS A PROCESS THAT MAY TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME.
   1. Growing in faith is a process. Mark 9:17-29; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-8;

1 Thessalonians 3:9,10

* 1. Growing in forgiveness is a process.
     1. All “good Christians” do not forgive at the first indication of repentance. Acts 9:26-28
     2. One of the things that keeps us from forgiving at all is thinking we have to forgive all at once.
     3. All Christians will not forgive at the same rate.
        1. Misunderstanding and fear are the seeds of strife. Mark 9:30-33
        2. These, along with guilt, often fertilize conflict which is watered by ignoring it. Mark 9:34; Luke 22:24
        3. Different people are able to deal with fear, guilt, conflict, and truth (which is the opposite of misunderstanding) at different levels and at different speeds.
  2. Forgiveness is more like growing a tree that turning on a light.
  3. The forgiver or the forgivee may need to talk about the sin more than once before the process is complete.
     1. I may need to see another’s sin before I see mine. 2 Samuel 12:1-6
     2. It is when I see how I am like other sinners that I see the pain that I have inflicted and want to do something about it. 2 Samuel 12:7-13
     3. David not only talked about it to Nathan, but wrote about it. Psalm 51
        1. He confesses his sin over and over.
        2. He asks for forgiveness repeatedly.
        3. There are at least twenty-one petitions dealing with these issues.
  4. I am to be involved in the process whether I am the offended or offender.
     1. Offender. Matthew 5:23-26
        1. Go to the one you have hurt.
        2. Talk to him or her as soon as you realize you have offended.
        3. Be aware of how important reconciliation is; it has priority over worship.
        4. Do everything you can to settle the issue even if the time is late and it seems out of your hands. Luke 12:58,59
     2. Offended. Matthew 18:15-17
        1. Go to try to get your relationship repaired with your brother, not just to check off the requirements. Psalm 51:6
        2. Use care in selecting the “one or two more”.
           1. State why you want to involve someone else: “We are not making the progress in getting this settled that I would like to see us make. Would it be helpful to get another person to assist us?”
           2. “Whom do you suggest?”
           3. “I trust brother... . How do you feel about him?”
           4. “Would you call one and I will call the other?”
           5. “Would it be good for us not to tell our story until we meet so that neither of the others will come with only one side of the story?”
           6. “Can we spend whatever time is necessary to help us work through this problem even though it may take more than one meeting?”
        3. My attitude can help.
           1. Realize that although I may be innocent in this case, I have not always been and will not always be. Romans 3:23
           2. Therefore, I come - not as one who has never sinned trying to get a sinner straightened out - but as one who has sinned and will sin coming to a brother in the way and spirit with which I want to be treated. Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:12; Luke 18:9-14
        4. Even though I am the “innocent party,” I want to try to learn something from each hurt that will help me in the next similar situation.
           1. If I can see nothing that I could change, there is helplessness and hopelessness.

I am completely at the mercy of others.

I have been hurt; there is nothing that I contributed to it; there is nothing I can do differently.

Therefore, if these or other people want to hurt me again, I am defenseless; I am at their mercy.

* + - * 1. But the tribulations that Paul experienced changed him and left him with hope. Romans 5:1-5; Hebrews 12:5-11
        2. James made a similar observation and tells us to pray to get the wisdom that we need to deal with the trials that come.

Which can be met with joy.

Which produce patience.

Which brings maturity. James 1:2-5

* + - 1. Some people will not cooperate with the process.
         1. I am to do all that I can.
         2. I can’t make anybody else do anything.
         3. I am free at that point. Titus 3:10, 11; Matthew 7:1-6

“When Would it Be a Sin to Forgive?”

1. WHAT DOES FORGETTING HAVE TO DO WITH FORGIVING?
   1. If I can still remember a hurt, does that mean that I have not forgiven?
   2. God forgives, and states that “I will remember their sin no more” yet He can and does recall the details of the transgression. Jeremiah 31:34
      1. David was forgiven. 2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 32:1-5
      2. Yet at least forty years later God would inspire a prophet to write about the details. 2 Samuel 11,12
      3. Saul of Tarsus was forgiven of his sins against Christ. Acts 22:16
      4. God the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record the sins that he committed at least thirty years after his sins had been forgiven. Acts 7,8,9
      5. Paul referred to his sins thirty years after they had been forgiven and yet this does not mean that he had not been forgiven.
         1. Paul remembered his past sins and their seriousness.

1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6

* + - 1. Yet he saw the guilt for these sins as in the past, forgiven, and no longer charged against him. 1 Timothy 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:10
  1. The forgetting that God does and expects us to do is the process of not holding the person in debt for the hurt caused and the sin committed. Romans 4:7,8
     1. When a sin is forgiven by us or by God it means that the sin is no longer charged to that person’s account by the one who has forgiven.
        1. The word used is an accounting term.
           1. *Thayer*, p. 379: “1 to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over; hence a. to take into account, to make account of; metaph. to pass to one’s account, to impute”.
           2. *Arndt and Gingrich*, p. 476,477: “put on someone’s account, charge to someone”.
        2. Therefore, the word does not have to do with recalling the event but whether the act is still charged against the account.
     2. Suppose we buy medicine from a drug store on credit and pay our bill once a month.
        1. At the end of the year, the store sends us a complete record of our transactions including the dates, prescription numbers, and prices of all that we have bought during the year.
        2. The bill is paid.
        3. There is nothing against our account.
        4. We do not owe anything.
        5. We are not in debt.
        6. Yet there is a full record of each transaction in the record books or computer of the store.
  2. How can I know when I have forgiven another person?
     1. When the person is a penitent brother or sister who wants to be forgiven.
        1. It is not when I can no longer recall the event; God does not even do that.
        2. It is when I no longer charge that person with the offense.
        3. It is when the wall is being removed that was between us.
        4. It is when I no longer wish hurt to that person.
        5. It is when I do not feel a knot in my stomach when I see or think about the offender.
        6. It is when I do not make a special effort to avoid the person.
     2. When it is a person who has no regret and does not want forgiveness.
        1. When I no longer think about the person constantly.
        2. When I cease trying and thinking how to “get even.”
        3. When I am no longer dominated by the thoughts and feelings of malice, fear, and vengeance toward the offender.

1. WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?
   1. This sounds like a lot of pain and work.
   2. Why should I go to this much effort and experience further pain to forgive someone who has already caused me hurt?
   3. These are good questions:
      1. How much does it cost? Luke 14:25-33
      2. How much is it worth – what do I get from it? Matthew 19:27
   4. I need to do it to be right with God and others. Matthew 6:14,15
      1. God has already forgiven me much more than I will ever be asked to forgive others. Matthew 18:21-35
      2. Therefore, being honest with myself and God (Psalm 51:6), if I fail to forgive the comparative “small” sins of my brother, I will have doubts that God can and will forgive my “big” sins.
         1. Some say there are no small and large sins.
         2. However, in this parable, there are $15,000,000.00 sins and $15.00 sins.
            1. Some kinds of fornication are more shocking than others. 1 Corinthians 5:1
            2. Some matters of the law are weightier, more important. Matthew 23:23
            3. Some sins are the size of a speck of sawdust and some are the size of a log. Matthew 7:3-5

Sawdust and logs are made of the same thing: wood; but one is bigger than the other.

All sins are wrong and hurt God; but some are bigger than others.

* 1. If I fail and/or refuse to forgive the sins of my brother, hopefully I will have feelings of guilt and shame coming to him or others for forgiveness.
     1. I know that I am being unfair and inconsistent, asking him to do something for me which I have decided not to do for him or others.
     2. If my supposed forgiveness is not from the heart (Matthew 18:35), I will not experience true forgiveness from others.
        1. I will probably assume that their forgiveness is only outward as mine has been.
        2. Although they have said they forgive me, they are probably just saying that to get me to leave them alone so they can have nothing else to do with me, or worse, to further hurt me – as I have done to them.
     3. And if that is the only forgiveness that I have given to others and have experienced from others, I cannot imagine that God will do differently.

Conclusion:

1. But God says something different. Psalm 103:12; Acts 2:38
2. Which brings us back to the beginning.
   1. Forgiveness is a process of growth.
   2. Forgiveness is related to faith. Mark 9:23,24
      1. Can I really believe that God can and will forgive me? – “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”
      2. Do I really believe that I can and will forgive others, even those who have inflicted tremendous pain? – “Lord, I forgive; help my lack of forgiveness and help me grow in this area of grace and mercy.” James 2:13;

Matthew 5:7

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