
UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS*

Part 1

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Introduction: Why do Christians need to understand forgiveness?

- A. Because of _____!
- B. Because too many churches and homes are _____!
- C. Because of the lack of _____ in many relationships!
- D. Because it reveals the reality of your _____ before God.

I. What is the Biblical understanding of forgiveness?

- A. Common incorrect notions masquerading as forgiveness
 - 1. When someone does you wrong, you expect them to _____.
 - 2. Saying you are " _____ " is the same thing as forgiveness.
 - 3. Admitting you were _____ means you are seeking forgiveness.
 - 4. In order to be fully forgiven I must _____ forgiven.
 - 5. In order to forgive I must have correct _____ of forgiveness.

B. Correct Biblical concept of forgiveness

1. Our forgiveness finds its _____ and _____ in God's forgiveness. (Ephesians 4:32)
2. God does not sit in heaven and simply _____ forgiveness.
3. Forgiveness is not a _____, it is a _____!

II. How do I apply the Biblical concept of forgiveness?

Luke 17:3-10

- A. Jesus gives us a warning (3) *"So watch yourselves"*
- B. The easy part of forgiveness (4)
 1. It is understood that when your brother sins, _____, you must go to him.
 2. This word, "rebuke", means we are to go in a _____ way.

**From Forgiven to Forgiveness, Jay Adams*

Application Questions: How does God want me to change?

1. Why is it important to base our forgiveness on God's forgiveness of us?
2. What motivations tend to dominate the heart that is unwilling to forgive another who has offended us?
3. How has psychology weaken our understanding of biblical forgiveness among Christians and in the church?
4. What do I need to change in order to bring my understanding and practice of forgiveness in line with what has been taught?

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Part 2

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Introduction: Is forgiveness unconditional?

- A. Many Christians teach that we must forgive another even when the other person does not seek our forgiveness.
- B. David Augsberger writes, "Christ's way was the way of giving forgiveness even before asked, even when it was not or never would be asked for by another...To think we needn't forgive until we are asked is a myth to be punctured." (*The Freedom of Forgiveness*, p. 36)
 - ☞ Luke 23:34 - Christ's prayer on the cross
- C. Betty Tapscott has written, "forgive unconditionally...There are times when we may even have to forgive an animal...Some people have to forgive an entire denomination...and an entire race of people" or an "entire country." (*Set Free Through Inner Healing*, p. 140, 148, 154)
- D. Roger Hurding describes Kenneth McAll's practice, "here there is the idea of a 'double forgiveness' in which the patient willingly forgives dead relatives...and, at the same time, asks forgiveness from them...McAll sees Jesus Christ as the mediator of this two-way reconciliation." (*The Tree of Healing*, p. 380)
- E. Carlos Velazquez-Garcia writes in a doctrinal dissertation presented to New York University, "The forgiving act does not need the actual presence of the parents. The patient, verbally, addresses the forgiveness to the imagined present parent." (*The Patient Forgives His Parents, A Clinical and Theoretical Exploration*, p. 2)

I. Was Christ's Prayer on the Cross an Offer of Unconditional Forgiveness?
Luke 23:34

- A. The implications of an affirmative answer
 - 1. Those at the foot of the cross were forgiven without ever _____ or _____ the gospel.

2. This would contradict other _____ and would have been an offer of Christ's that _____.

B. The importance of a negative answer

1. On the cross, Jesus did not offer His torturers _____, He _____.
2. The prayer of Jesus on the cross was answered at _____.
3. The forgiveness for which Jesus prayed was not _____ but was dependent entirely on _____.

II. What About Forgiving Animals, Countries, Groups and Churches?

A. Is this what the Bible teaches?

1. The Bible does not say anything about this type of _____.
2. This teaching on forgiveness is focused upon the _____ of the one who thinks they have been _____.
3. This view of forgiveness is very _____.

B. What are we to do if the one who needs forgiving is not present or is unwilling to confess their sin?

1. The Bible is very concerned with the _____ of the one who is to grant the _____.
2. This prayerful _____ shows that you are willing to make the promise of forgiveness if the _____ ever arises.
3. This "forgiving" in prayer in no way _____ your responsibility to grant your brother forgiveness.

III. If forgiveness was "unconditional" then the whole process of church discipline is nonsense! Matthew 18:15-20

- A. This is the reason many churches do not practice church discipline is they do not understand the goal of Biblical forgiveness
1. The offended party goes to his brother _____ (15a; cf. Luke 17:3).
 2. If confession is obtained and the promise of forgiveness granted then the matter has been _____ (15b).
 3. If the offending person refuses to hear the offended person then it is a _____ to take one or two witness/counselors to mediate the difference (16).
 4. If the witnesses have failed to achieve repentance then the church must take care of it by _____ action (17a).
 5. If there is still no confession or repentance they are to be put _____ of the church, _____ (17b).
- B. What are the implications of this for you as a Christian?
1. You must never make a promise of forgiveness to someone who has not _____.
 2. You must realize the forgiveness process is important for many reasons beyond "_____."
 3. You must understand that "_____ " teaches us to ignore problems instead of deal with them in a godly way.

IV. Should we practice this forgiveness process with every offense?

- A. God's means of dealing with the many offenses of daily life
1. Everyday offenses do not require the Biblical procedure of forgiveness; they require _____.
 2. Only those offenses that _____ fellowship and result in an _____ condition requires the Biblical procedure of forgiveness.
 3. Be careful of _____ here.
- B. How do I forgive people who are dead or who I have lost touch with?
1. Never pray to the _____ or act like you are talking with the dead.
 2. You simply let God know of your _____ to forgive and of your _____ to get rid of all of your bitterness and resentment toward them (Mark 11:25).
 3. When you are wronged by countries or groups you must follow the example of _____ and dying _____ (Acts 7:60) and pray for the forgiveness (_____) of your persecutors.

**From Forgiven to Forgiveness, Jay Adams*

Application Questions: How does God want me to change?

1. What is the difference between conditional and unconditional forgiveness?
2. What problems arise when forgiveness among Christians is always unconditional?
3. What is the difference between transactional forgiveness (Luke 17:3-5) and attitudinal forgiveness (Mark 11:25)? Why is this distinction important?
4. What heart issues would cause me to want to ignore transactional forgiveness and only practice attitudinal forgiveness?

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Introduction:

- A. Even though we have been completely forgiven of our sins by God (_____ forgiveness) we still need to seek daily forgiveness of our sins from God and others because God is our _____ (_____ forgiveness).
- B. The believer who has sinned against his brother and does not desire to seek forgiveness is in great danger:
- ✓ of _____ discipline
 - ✓ of _____ your heart
 - ✓ of severe discipline of _____
- C. God stresses that we seek to make things right _____ if we have sinned against our brother.

I. Clearing Up Misconceptions About Forgiveness

- A. What about "forgive and forget"?
1. There is a critical difference between "not _____" and "_____."
 2. There is **no** command in the Bible that says, "_____ and _____".
- B. What about apologizing?
1. The Bible *never* says that we should make an _____; it always says we should ask for _____.
 2. Apologizing has its roots in _____ thinking and behavior.

- ✓ The Greek term *apologia* (απολογία) was a judicial term which meant to _____ oneself in court.
- ✓ Eventually, in a milder form, apologizing became a common way to express "_____." In other words, you feel bad about what happened but there is no admission of _____ or _____.

3. Apologizing short-circuits the _____ and _____ process necessary in forgiveness.

- ❶ Apologies dump _____; Forgiveness deals with _____!
- ❷ Apologies desire _____; Forgiveness desires _____!
- ❸ Apologies are _____ - _____; Forgiveness is _____ - _____ (and God-focused)!
- ❹ Apologies seek a _____; Forgiveness seeks a _____!
- ❺ Apologies _____; Forgiveness _____!

C. What about forgiving God?

- 1. Forgiving God is a common teaching among Christian _____.
- 2. God _____ needs forgiving because God has never done anything _____.
- 3. To even suggest that God needs to be forgiven is blatant _____ and _____.

D. What about forgiving self?

1. It is common to hear some teach that man has a problem forgiving _____.
2. There is _____ statement in the Bible that even suggests that man must _____ himself.
 - The self-forgiveness error is built upon the false notion that men tend to look down upon themselves. Low self-esteem, it is believed, plagues man so he must get a higher view of himself and forgive himself of his self-depreciating opinions.
3. The Bible teaches that man tends to be _____ - _____ toward himself, which means his inclination is to be _____ and _____ - _____.

E. What about the unforgivable sin?

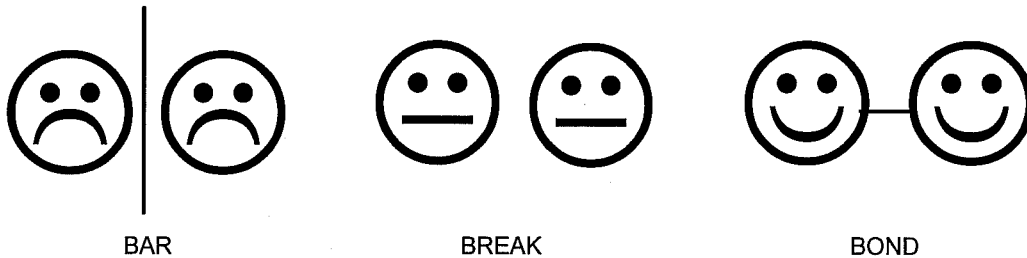
1. Matthew 12:22-33 - Attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to an unclean spirit = unforgivable sin.
 - ❶ Persons who commit the unforgivable sin are _____ Christians.
 - ❷ Persons who commit the unforgivable sin are _____ concerned about _____ Christians.
2. I John 5:16 - Those who have committed the "*sin unto death*".
 - ❶ This does **not** mean that the Christian should _____ if a brother has committed a sin that leads to death (*cf.* I Cor. 11:30 or Deut. 21:22; 22:26) or not before he prays for God to grant him life (raise him up from his sickbed).

- ② It means it is proper to pray for healing at _____
_____ without having to find out all the
details.

II. The Larger Context For Forgiveness

A. What does God really want?

1. Forgiveness is just one step in a much _____
process.
2. God does not just forgive you, He proceeds to establish a
_____ with you so that you will
_____ close to Him.
3. The goal of forgiveness is _____.



B. What will keep us from drifting apart?

1. Sometimes in order for restoration to be complete another
committed _____ (Galations 6:1-2) or pastor is
needed to offer Biblical steps to rebuild the relationship.
2. _____ steps need to be taken by a church who
has a repentant brother who desires restoration from a state
of discipline (II Corinthians 2:7-8).
 - ① The _____ of forgiveness
 - ② _____ in making things right
 - ③ A reaffirmation of _____

III. Practicing Forgiveness With Unbelievers

- A. What is the believer's responsibility with an unbeliever?
1. The believer has a responsibility to live at _____ with _____ men (Romans 12:18).
 2. You must understand that this is _____ always possible.
 3. You must understand that you are the only one who may act _____ in a relationship with an unbeliever.
- B. What about an unbeliever and repentance?
1. There is a difference between _____ sorrow and _____ sorrow.
 2. All the verses on forgiveness in the Bible are within the context of _____ resolving a conflict.
 3. On rare occasions you may have to take an unbeliever to _____.
- C. What should a believer do when he offends an unbeliever?
1. First, you must realize an unbeliever cannot forgive in the _____ sense.
 2. Second, you should ask him to _____ you.

**From *Forgiven to Forgiveness*, Jay Adams*

Application Questions: How does God want me to change?

1. In what ways have you heard Christians use misconceptions of forgiveness? Can you give some examples from your past without revealing a person's identity?
2. What is the unforgivable sin according to a faithful understanding of Scripture? Why do some Christians say they think they have committed the unforgivable sin? What are some possible motivations they may have?
3. Why is an unbeliever incapable of forgiving or repenting? What are some good responses you can give to an unbeliever who has wronged you or you have wronged?
4. Why is it important to view forgiveness as only the first step in a broader process of reconciliation? How do Christians fail in this misunderstanding?

