
Subject: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [jismazed](#) on Sun, 12 Apr 2009 22:58:03 GMT

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One of the greatest weapons for the gospel around the world has been forgiveness. When the followers of Jesus are hurt, killed, fired, divorced, displaced or maligned simply because they believe in Him, they can choose to either resent and hate their persecutors or forgive them. When they forgive them on a consistent basis, the persecutors eventually notice it and begin to understand the character of Christ. The forgiveness paves the way for the Christians to share the basis for the forgiveness- the cross of Christ- and the persecutors become believers. This has happened many times throughout church history, and it is particularly common in Muslim countries. I know that it has had a noticeable impact in parts of northern Nigeria, where there are frequent religious riots. When the Christians there attack the Muslims who attacked them, the tensions get worse and the Muslim get hardened to the gospel. When the Christians forgive, the persecutors sometimes get saved.

Clearly Jesus taught that we are to forgive a person no matter how many times they sin against us. At least 490! The pharisees taught that if a person offends another and apologizes, you need to forgive them, but if they do it 7 times then it must mean that they were not sincere, so you don't need to forgive them after that. Of course, Jesus came along and taught that not only do we forgive 7 times, but 70 x 7. This is because we all sin and offend many times, and the Lord would have wiped us all out long time ago had He limited us to just 7 times.

There's no question that we are to forgive a repentant brother as often as they need forgiveness. But 2 questions arise that need to be answered. I have my ideas based on what I believe scripture teaches, but I would like to hear from others first.

1. Do we always have to forgive someone who is not repentant for their sin against us? God forgives those who repent. Should we hold them to the same condition? (Example: One of my clients was sexually abused by her father numerous times as a child. He never repented, and he denied that he did such things. Should she forgive him anyway? Should she have called the police when she was a teenager?)

2. When we forgive, does that mean that we should not allow any negative consequences to happen to the person because of their offense against us? (Example: The woman mentioned in #1 above was expected by the family to go over to her parents house as an adult for Thanksgiving and pray around the table with the family while her father said the blessing. Should she feel like she needs to go to the Thanksgiving meal, or is she free to keep her distance from him because of what he did?)

Hint: I believe that part of the answer to these questions lies in the TWO words for forgiveness in the NT Greek language. One is more conditional than the other.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [Mark L](#) on Mon, 13 Apr 2009 01:08:04 GMT
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I think that forgiveness has more to do with freeing us than them. When we refuse to forgive we burn the very bridge we ourselves have to walk over. I don't think it has anything to do with are they repentant or not. Forgiving her father frees her.

I don't think forgiveness has to mean restoration. Some hurts are very deep and very painfull. Forgiveness should bring healing for that of course. But I would think it was really up to her whether to see him or not. I definately don't think forgiving him has to mean restoration.

Phillip Yancy in his book on Grace talked about this subject. Forgiveness and Grace. The forgiveness of God in our life should lead to our forgiving and having grace toward others.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [GWB](#) on Mon, 13 Apr 2009 03:27:54 GMT
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Wow...if all of us really believed the message of the crucified life and forgiveness towards others, everyone who had ever posted here at OO would be burning up the lines and sharing the Word.

I have personally questioned the matter of forgiveness and personal security, physically and spiritually...it is hard for me.

I am open to any comments.

GWB

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [james](#) on Mon, 13 Apr 2009 15:25:39 GMT
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I agree with you Mark, forgiveness is for us as much as those we are forgiving. It allows God to remove bitterness that usually accompanies unforgiveness, as well. Plus we know what Jesus said in Matt.6:15...If we aren't forgiving, we can't expect forgiveness from our Father.

There are some extremely painful situations in some peoples lives, such as the example Jiz gave, but we must forgive in order to receive forgiveness. Sometimes forgiving someone will require more than we want to pay, that's when we must remember the price Jesus paid, that we can approach God in confidence and know He will forgive us...But we must have a forgiving heart. And thank God for His mercy and long suffering, because I've used up my 490, long ago.

Jiz, you asked several questions concerning the woman/girl who was abused as a teenager. You, as a social worker/counselor christian, know the answer as to if she should forgive him. But the going to family functions and acting like everything's hunky dory? That's another question all together. I guess that would come down to if she wants to or not...I don't think she is required by God to do that, as long as he denies it ever happening.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [jjsamazed](#) on Tue, 14 Apr 2009 03:42:36 GMT

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I mostly agree. It has been said, "Refusal to forgive someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." We can forgive even our enemies, because the Lord has forgiven us. The Lord forgives all of our sins as far as the east is from the west because we have ACKNOWLEDGED them via confession, repentance and faith. Does He forgive those who refuse to repent? Should we? When I was posed that question a few years ago, my initial, automatic reaction was, "Of course." However, in examining the scriptures it seems that Jesus' teaching on forgiveness sometimes addressed our attitudes only towards those who confess their sin to us. Other times, it seems to be unconditional.

If forgiveness means that we relate to the person as if they are clean, as if the offense never happened, then it gets sticky. That woman cannot relate to her father as if he never abused her. His sin is still on him. There is no separation from the sin, which is what forgiveness literally means (one of the words for forgiveness has the same root as the word for divorce, indicating a complete separation the offender's sins). However, I would say that the offer for forgiveness needs to be there, ready to be given as soon as the person repents. More on this later when I get into a more thorough explanation of the Biblical concepts of forgiveness, of which there are several. Part of the problem is in the limits of the English language. Stay tuned.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [jjsamazed](#) on Tue, 14 Apr 2009 03:50:19 GMT
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james wrote on Mon, 13 April 2009 10:25I agree with you Mark, forgiveness is for us as much as those we are forgiving. It allows God to remove bitterness that usually accompanies unforgiveness, as well. Plus we know what Jesus said in Matt.6:15...If we aren't forgiving, we can't expect forgiveness from our Father.

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I mostly agree with you as well. Forgiveness is a powerful healing force that the psychological community has largely overlooked, and, yes, I have encouraged her to forgive in in a certain sense of the word. However, has she completely forgiven him, viewing him as clean from his sin, if she cannot bring herself to go to dinner with him? Does the Lord say to us, "I forgive you, but I don't want to spend time with you anymore"?

I'm simply asking the questions that have been asked me. Again, I agree with you for the most part, but I suspect that we have used the word forgiveness too broadly in our culture. When I have time, I will give a more thorough explanation of what I believe to be the Biblical teaching on it.

I appreciate everyone's input so far. --Jae

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [sparkles](#) on Wed, 15 Apr 2009 21:15:03 GMT
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HI GWB,
I am not sure I understand what you mean by:

"I have personally questioned the matter of forgiveness and personal security, physically and spiritually...it is hard for me."

Do you mean you have a hard time forgiving others? Or do you feel physically threatened? I think we all struggle with forgiveness at times, but still, we are to forgive.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [GWB](#) on Thu, 16 Apr 2009 03:02:01 GMT
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The bottom line is that we forgive, and that is what I do.

Blessings,

GWB

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [james](#) on Sun, 19 Apr 2009 02:10:23 GMT
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Gillyann,

You say you're open to comments, yet when Sue asked you a question trying to understand where you're coming from, you seem to give a short, cut off answer...???? Why post that if you aren't going to allow a person to enter into a conversation with you on the subject of forgiveness?

Of course I'm sure she forgave you...

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [GWB](#) on Sun, 19 Apr 2009 22:47:00 GMT
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Sorry if I ruffled your feathers James. I did not intend to offend anyone in any way, shape, or form. I just do not think it is all that hard. Either you do or you don't, forgive that is. It is just that simple to me. I think forgiveness is the last thing people should be arguing about.

I do apologize for any misunderstanding.

GWB (Gillyann)

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [james](#) on Sun, 19 Apr 2009 23:01:02 GMT
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Not to worry, you didn't ruffle any feathers. Sue was the one was trying to talk with you..you had said in the earlier post that you had "personally questioned the matter of forgiveness and personal security, physically and spiritually...it is hard for me." And she was trying to comment, but needed clarification on what you meant.

I thought, no more people posting here than there is, looks like we'd take advantage of someone wanting to engage in discussion on any topic, guess not...

But the golf game Mark linked to sure is fun....

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [GWB](#) on Mon, 20 Apr 2009 00:14:32 GMT
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Hey James,

I have been thinking about my comment in context of everything we have discussed.

I was too brief and for that I am sorry.

Where it is hard for me is the struggle with the flesh before you decide in your heart to forgive. After you deal with that, it is then simple...dealing with yourself is not!

I think some good comments on forgiving yourself and condemnation would be good to cover while we are at it!

Blessings,

GWB Gillyann

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [james](#) on Mon, 20 Apr 2009 00:53:13 GMT

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I think for most people (Christians), forgiving ones self is by far the hardest. And I would venture to say, that overcoming that voice of the accuser of the brethern, trying to bring condemnation, is the next hardest thing to overcome. But what sayeth God?

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom.8:1

So while in words it is easy, if we believe that what God says is true and that His Word is for ever settled in heaven; but then comes the daily walk and exercise of the faith HE has given us. That's why the Baptism is SO important, without The Holy Spirit to raise up that standard(the Word of God, which is powerful and sharper than any two edged sword) we could easily be defeated...BUT, when we can do as Jesus did, when satan was trying to tempt Him in the wilderness and answer, 'It is written'....there is therefore NOW, NO condemnation...

Of course, he doesn't give up easily, he'll probably respond with the accusation that the person isn't 'in Christ Jesus' which will require the answer of what God said about that... It don't hurt to remind him he was defeated at calvary.

Forgiveness is crucial in a Christians life, our salvation hangs upon it...Jesus plainly stated that when we pray, to ask our Father to forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Matt.6:15 " But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

It may be hard...the cross is just that, a cross, a place for dying...just ask Jesus...yet He told us to take it up daily and follow Him. He's all about forgiveness, so must we be.....Christian.....Christ like.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.

Posted by [jisamazed](#) on Sat, 16 May 2009 04:44:28 GMT

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We have to first clarify what we mean when we use the words "forgive" or "forgiveness". Otherwise, we are not on the same page.

We can start by identifying what forgiveness is NOT. It is NOT:

1. Pretending the offense never happened
2. Simply no longer holding a grudge
3. A way to make people do something (I will forgive you if you do such and such)
4. A way for an abuser to take advantage of his or her victim
5. An excuse for maintaining poor boundaries with someone who is doing you wrong
6. Blocking the offense out of your mind
7. A backdoor way of accusing someone of harming you (saying "I forgive you" when the person never really offended you)

In Matthew 18, Jesus gives the perfect analogy of forgiveness. It had to do with not demanding that a debt be paid. The word "forgive" often was used in a business context. If someone was owed money or some other material item, he could forgive the debtor, meaning that the person did not owe him anything anymore. He could also decide to not forgive the debt, in which case, if the case went before a judge, the debtor would have to give to the creditor whatever the judge said to give in order to pay off the debt. If he had no money, he would have to give up property. If he did not have enough property, his children, wife, or himself would be sold on the slave market and the profit be given to the creditor. The debt legally had to be paid no matter the cost. Nowadays we have bankruptcy. He could also reduce the debt, but reducing the debt is never called forgiveness. Only a complete write-off of the debt was called forgiveness. If that happened, the debtor was no longer a debtor, and was under no obligation.

So it is with God, us and each other. God forgave the debt of our sins, which means we no longer owe Him. He has completely written it off. Jesus paid it in full. His blood is the full payment. We are debt-free before God, no matter how much or how badly we have sinned. Realizing that fact is incredibly freeing and will make us shout and dance for joy!

We are to forgive others in the same way. Those who have sinned against us do not owe us anything if we have truly forgiven them. We do not try to make them pay for their offense. We do not seek revenge. We do not exchange insult for insult. We allow the Lord to take vengeance if He so wishes. The offender has to answer to Him. We can even pray that the person will repent and the Lord forgive him. We do not demand anything from them because of their offense.

However, that does not mean that we allow a nonrepentant person to offend us again. The woman I referred to in the first post should have sent her father's perverted hide to jail, not only for justice' sake, but to keep him from doing that to anyone else. She also should not feel obligated at all to attend the meal. In fact, if she confronted her father and he still denied the abuse, I would recommend she not go at all. If she has forgiven him in the Matthew 18 sense, she will not expect

payback. However, she does not owe him anything, either.

It is late, so I don't have time to address the other concept of forgiveness, but I will try to do so next post. Tell me what you think so far...

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [james](#) on Sat, 16 May 2009 14:59:43 GMT
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Amazed James,

You make some good points, how many times have we seen and heard #7 of 'what forgiveness is NOT'...

" A backdoor way of accusing someone of harming you (saying "I forgive you" when the person never really offended you)"

Often times it is an attempt to elevate the person speaking or writing, to a position of self righteousness; in effect saying, 'You are wrong, I am right, but because I'm so holy and perfect, then I'll forgive you'...that stinks, and sadly we've all probably at one time or another, been guilty of doing that. It stems from a mindset of being 'religious' rather than spiritual; of yielding to the flesh rather than walking in the humility of Jesus..." Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." ~I Peter 2:23

I believe it is an attempt to gain control of a situation or portray oneself as a peacekeeper, meek and godly; while in reality, they are trying to cause either a guilt trip on someone or as I said, control through appearing righteous.

I agree AJ, a person who truly has forgiven someone, doesn't seek to get in the last word, or justify themselves (if they were offended or sinned against); they seek mercy for that person by way of prayer and intercession before God, and revenge is the last thing they desire to see...They understand their own need for mercy and forgiveness and are desirous to extend it to others.

Subject: Re: The weapon of forgiveness.
Posted by [jisamazed](#) on Mon, 25 May 2009 06:44:26 GMT
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Amen to that.

We can apply this teaching to the experiences that we have had in abusive churches or from abusive brethren. They do not owe us a thing. We do not desire vengeance, and we do not desire that bad things happen to them. We examine ourselves to see if we offended anyone else the same way, and hopefully try to make it right with them.

We have to view those situations through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, and in light of God's grace. He was tortured to death to redeem us from the guilt and wounds from those experiences. The basis for forgiveness is the cross of Christ.
