

Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Brenda has an appointment with a surgeon tomorrow
- David's brother and Debbie's dad are being treated for blood clots in lung
- Michelle, Brenda's Daughter has Bell's Palsy and is undergoing treatments for it.
- Kass' Grandmother has been diagnosed with Lung Cancer.
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- Porters plan to travel back from GA tomorrow
- Tom & Kate will be traveling to CO this week.
- The Christians in the Philippines.
- Bible class tomorrow night 7:00pm at Chad and Kass' on evangelism

For prayer requests, call or text
Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

Assignments

Today Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – Tom Mitchell Lord's Table – David Porter Sermon – Ross Ward	Wednesday Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – Chad Mitchell Invitation – Ross Ward
Next Sunday Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – David Porter Lord's Table – Chad Mitchell Sermon – Ross Ward	Next Wednesday Bible Study – Ross Ward Song Leader – David Porter Invitation – Ross Ward

Blackfoot Church of Christ
370 North Shilling Ave.
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

Meeting Times:
Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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What does it mean to Forgive?

By Doy Moyer

Sin has destructive consequences on many levels, often involving not just the person or persons who sinned, but also affecting a number of others. Family, friends, coworkers, and others within a sphere of influence can feel the impact of our sins. That is the nature of the beast, and we've all been on both the committing and offended ends.

We've all sinned, and all sin is against God (Rom 3:23; Psa 51:4). There is no one sin that is better than another, though the consequences may well differ. Some sins have lasting consequences that will never go away, as David experienced. Other sins may have shorter-term consequences. We should never minimize any type of sin, for, on the one hand, the real consequence that drives repentance is the understanding that we are out of fellowship with God by continuing in our sin. On the other hand, we should be heartbroken that we have grieved the Spirit and then seek to demonstrate a zeal for serving and pleasing God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psa 51:17). "...what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!" (2 Cor 7:11)

Now we turn to the question of what to do when a brother or sister repents of and confesses sin. There are different levels of this as well, for the sin may involve directly sinning against another, or it may not be so direct, though all sin is against God. One who is striving to make things right will do what is needed, whether going to the one against whom sin was committed (cf. Matt 5:23-24), or going to God (1 John 1:8-9). Our concern here, however, is how to treat one who is penitent. This is after the other steps have been taken, including going to the one who has sinned (cf. Matt 18:15-20), a step which may not be necessary if the person has already confessed and indicated repentance.

We should recognize that our attitude should always be that of desiring to forgive. "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). "Anything against anyone" is a pretty tall order, but it is what the Lord said. We must never keep a grudge or fall into bitterness even if one doesn't repent. Rather, we must be of a forgiving spirit, recognizing that God is the final Judge in all matters. We are taught what to do with those who refuse to repent (cf. 1 Cor 5; Matt 18:21-22), but even then our attitudes must remain gracious and compassionate, knowing that God extends His grace and mercy toward us. Seeking to be reconciled to God, and to His glory, is always the main concern.

What, then, does it mean to demonstrate forgiveness? Note again that we aren't now asking what it looks like for one to demonstrate repentance. Rather, those who are to forgive need to know what it means to do so, and this isn't always easy. Here are a few thoughts toward that end.

1. Forgiveness requires that a price is paid. The one who forgives will always pay some kind of price. The one who sinned is already paying a price, so to speak, but now we are being asked to lay that sin aside and not hold it against him. I might have to bear a loss to do this. I might need to swallow my own pride so as not to be embittered. I may have been hurt deeply, and I have to put those feelings in perspective and now accept this person as a brother or sister again. Forgiveness is costly. However, remember the price paid by our Lord in the shedding of His blood on our behalf so that we may be forgiven and reconciled with God. The price Jesus paid was far greater than any price I'll ever need to pay in order to forgive another. We have no right to hold sin over the head of another on the basis that we feel personally hurt, knowing what God through Christ has done for us. Failing to forgive means that our own forgiveness from God is in jeopardy, for "if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:15). This is serious business.

2. Forgiveness means laying no greater burden on someone than what his own sins have already done. It is not our job to punish or "teach them a lesson" that goes further than Scripture shows. It is not our job to put a fence around someone with rules that are not biblical, for that gets in the way of true reconciliation. We might have opinions and suggestions to offer, and trust may slowly build again, but even then we must be careful not to put additional requirements on someone that the Scriptures never give.

Perhaps we think this is unfair. We may think that someone needs to suffer more "for what he did," or that it's not "just" that the person in question isn't punished more than what it seems he has already suffered. Yet that's not our call. We aren't in the punishing business. If the due course of one's sin leads to difficulties and severe consequences, then we should never seek to pile on with more simply because we think he deserves it. That is not grace.

Grace is not fair. We are called upon to show grace and mercy, not fairness in meting out punishment upon the penitent. When we all stand before God on the Day of Judgment, no one will be asking for fairness, for that would mean asking to get what we deserve (i.e., eternity in hell). Rather, we will be begging for God's grace and mercy, and He has demonstrated in the greatest of ways that this is what He wants to show. In following our Lord, we need to be people of grace and mercy in our forgiving others because this is what God does.

3. Forgiveness means reaffirming love for the person. We should not continue to try to make one feel bad by constantly reminding that person of the sin. That's not what forgiveness or love looks like at all. Read 1 Corinthians 13 again. Love is not resentful. It does not rejoice in sin, but in the truth. Yet love also "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." In other words, love does not hold in grudges or keep count of wrongdoing, but rather gives the benefit of the doubt and shows forbearance. If we are continually reminding others of what they have done wrong (and they are already probably well aware of it), then we have chosen a path devoid of love. A person already convicted of their sins doesn't need someone's reminders of it; he needs their love, just as we all need God's.

Paul had a deep concern for the brother who had sinned in Corinth and was now trying to do what was right. Notice how he addressed this circumstance:

"Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." (2 Cor 2:5-11, ESV)

Paul knew that they had been hurt by the situation. The man had caused pain for others. Yet what had already happened in marking the brother was sufficient (if this is the 1 Corinthians 5 scenario or another like it). Now that the brother had repented (whatever the nature of the sin),

they needed to "forgive and comfort him" because he may otherwise "be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow." Showing love for the brother here was not about trying to make that brother more sorrowful than he already was. That was not their job; theirs was to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love. Do we see a pattern for us in this? When we don't forgive and reaffirm our love, our harsh reactions play into the designs of Satan, and more souls will be lost. By responding unlovingly, we may drive the brother away back into the clutches of Satan. Sadly, we'll be in those same clutches.

4. Forgiveness means being merciful and treating the person as we would want to be treated in a similar situation. The "golden rule" doesn't end just because someone has sinned. "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 7:12). This essentially incorporates all of the above. Again, we might feel hurt. Perhaps we have taken something personally. Yet the brother or sister has repented, and now we have to ask, how would I want to be treated under similar circumstances? Would I want my brethren to remind me incessantly? Would I want them to devise additional rules that aren't divinely given? How would I want to be considered from this point on?

Part of that answer lies in the realization that all of us have been guilty of sin and have needed that forgiveness from God, if not also from others. We've been on the receiving end of forgiveness, and we do well to remember this. We also recognize that the person asking forgiveness needs to be humble, contrite, and not demand that others act a certain way toward them. But that's on them. What is on "us" is that we treat people with mercy, compassion, and love, knowing that we, too, have been the recipients of forgiveness.

Our job is not to judge whether or not they mean what they say. If they say they are sorry and ask for forgiveness, then our task is not to analyze whether or not they are being honest. Yes, there will be fruits worthy of repentance, and time will tell. They will have to grapple with whether or not their sorrow is more worldly or godly (2 Cor 7:10-11). We all must grapple with the same. However, we on the forgiving end must always operate under the principle of giving the benefit of any doubt. Love, again, demands no less. "Then Peter came and said to Him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (Matt 18:21-22) Like it or not, that's our Master's teaching.

If we are not careful, the way that we react could, itself, be sinful. We may think that we are acting with righteous indignation toward one who has sinned. Instead, we may be reacting with unrighteous anger, and this could put our own souls at risk. We may find ourselves, like the elder brother in the parable of the lost sons, angry over the notion that one who has sinned so grievously can come back into the good graces of the Father without a more severe punishment (Luke 15:11-32). We may cringe at the idea of the celebration on behalf of the prodigal son. We may be angry because we think we never did anything so bad as our brother, and it's not fair that he gets treated to the best robe, a ring, and a party. Yet know that when we do such, we are not of the Father in our attitude or actions. God celebrates repentance. Angels rejoice over one sinner who repents. Do we?

Forgiveness hits home for us all. When it comes time to forgive others, we should eagerly do so. We should rejoice. The patience, understanding, and kindness involved may not always come easy to us, but it is the heart and mind of our Lord Jesus, and He has clearly expressed Himself on this matter. May God help us all to seek the best in others, to seek reconciliation with God, and to be committed to His Word.