

“Unconditional Forgiveness?”**1. Intro:**

- 1.1. **Why this study:** Wow, last week people were listening! 😊 **Lk.17:3,4**
 - 1.1.1. **Controversy:** “You don’t have to forgive unless someone repents.”
 - 1.1.2. Some thought they heard, *“Brian said you can live in unforgiveness, bitterness, & hatred, until they repent.”*
- 1.2. **Question:** Do you **unconditionally forgive** when 1st wronged, & then give **completed forgiveness** if you are able to work it our later?
 - 1.2.1. **Or**, do you have a heart **ready to forgive & commit it unto the Lord** when 1st wronged, & then offer forgiveness when they repent?
- 1.3. **Topical Bible Studies...**
 - 1.3.1. It’s like doing a **puzzle**. You **separate the colors into piles** because it helps in putting the whole picture together.
 - 1.3.2. This study is as vast as the ocean, we’ll swim through what we can this morn.
- 1.4. **My heart:** Ken Sande signed **Mt.5:9** in my book The Peacemaker – Let’s see what it says. [not peace-fakers; not peace-at all costs; not peace-pretenders] **Those who seek to MAKE peace!**
 - 1.4.1. “The reference is to those who impartially come between 2 contending parties and try to make peace. These God calls His sons because they are like Him.” (TDNT)
 - 1.4.2. Heb.12:14 **“Pursue peace with all people, & holiness, w/o which no one will see the Lord.”**

2. UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS?

- 2.1. **DEFINING FORGIVENESS!**
- 2.2. The key to understanding the **imagery of forgiveness** is that it views sin as *something that needs to be eradicated or removed*.
 - 2.2.1. **Some of the imagery is spatial:** “Sin is removed & cast into the depths of the sea”, it’s “swept away...like a cloud and...like mist”, “cast behind God’s back”, “set aside”, or “put away”.¹
- 2.3. Complementing this motif is one that focuses on *disrupted relationships between people that need to be restored*.
- 2.4. In **both cases** the imagery of forgiveness revolves around solving a problem through either the **removal of something** **or** **reconciliation with someone**.
 - 2.4.1. Forgiveness is a **change of status** from *guilt to declared innocence*.
 - 2.4.2. There is a psychological dimension to this **before and after** experience, with anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms **preceding** the act of being forgiven, **and** relief and joy **following it**.

¹Dictionary of biblical imagery (electronic ed.) (302). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- 2.5. When you hear the word **forgive** “**give**” is at its root!
- 2.5.1. So to “**forGIVE**” means to **give** someone a release from the wrong that he has done to you. It means to **give up** any right of retaliation.
- 2.5.2. “The underlying idea is of giving up resentment or a claim” (Encarta Dict.)
- 2.6. **RECONCILIATION** = a change from enmity to friendship. It is mutual. It is a change wrought in both parties who have been at enmity.²
- 2.7. An important clarification between **forgiveness** & **reconciliation**!
- 2.7.1. **Forgiveness** = the promise to not bring it up again to them, to others, nor to yourself.
- 2.7.2. **Reconciliation** = to bring 2 parties into unity, harmony, agreement.
- 2.7.2.1. A wife can **forgive** her husband for adultery, but that does not mean that she is required to blindly trust his lifestyle.
- 2.7.2.2. There normally is counseling, the passing of time, & accountability. [Regaining trust is a difficult process!]
- 2.8. Here is the ideal Biblical response to sin:
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|--------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2.8.1. | The sinning party! | The Offended party! |
| 2.8.2. | [1] Repentance – Share it. | [1] Hear it |
| 2.8.3. | [2] Confession – Name it. | [2] Accept it |
| 2.8.4. | [3] Restitution – Restore it. | [3] Receive it |
| 2.8.5. | [4] Change – Explain it. | [4] Encourage it |
| 2.8.6. | [5] Forgiveness – Ask for it. | [5] Give it |
| 2.8.7. | [6] Reconciliation – Bring it. | [6] Work on it |
- 2.9. **IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS!**
- 2.10. Forgiveness has given new incentive and emphasis in the NT because of God’s forgiveness in the death of Christ. **Hence forgiveness is a uniquely Christian doctrine.** In **other religions**, forgiveness doesn’t have the same force.
- 2.10.1. In **animism**, there is no awareness of a personal relationship with God. (*anima*=soul; things in nature have souls, i.e. trees, mountains, etc)
- 2.10.2. In **Hinduism**, all have to pay the inexorable consequences of *karma* in the wheel of reincarnations.
- 2.10.3. **Buddhism** likewise knows nothing of a forgiving God.
- 2.10.4. The idea is present in **Islam**, but there’s no personal God and Father.
- 2.10.5. Even in **Judaism**, forgiveness remains a limited experience.³
- 2.11. **TYPES OF FORGIVENESS!**
- 2.12. **Pesky Peccadillo’s!** (a petty offense)
- 2.13. Prov.19:11 “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, & his glory is to **overlook** a transgression.”
- 2.14. 1 Pet.4:8 “love **covers** a multitude of sins”.

²Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

³*Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*. Map on lining papers. (810). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House.

- 2.14.1. It is only those sins which **throw the covers off** that must be dealt with by Luke 17 or the Matt 18 process.
- 2.14.1.1. Offenses that **break fellowship & lead to an unreconciled condition** require “forgiveness”.
- 2.14.2. **This should happen when?** – [1] If the offense **didn’t create a wall** between you & the other person [2] If the offense **didn’t cause serious harm** to God’s reputation, to others, or to the offender.
- 2.14.3. **Ps: It’s not overlooking an offense if you simply file it away** to use later against them! 😊
- 2.15. Dale Carnegie once noted that the only animal the **grizzly** would allow to eat with him was the **skunk**. Grizzly bears in Yellowstone Park often come to eat at the place where garbage is dumped. This huge bear can fight and beat almost any animal in the West, but it lets the skunk share its meal. Carnegie said that the grizzly surely resented the skunk and could have easily killed the little creature in any fight. No doubt the bear would have liked to have gotten even with him for his intrusion. But he didn’t. **Why? Because he knew the high cost of getting even.**
- 2.15.1. Most **animals** are not dumb. They are much smarter than many **humans** who allow **their stomachs** to churn all day, **their minds** to storm all night, & **their souls** to turn black with hatred as they plot revenge!
- 2.15.2. **Bitterness** is the most dangerous of all plagues to healthy Christian living. It will eat away at the vitality of your spiritual life until your once-vibrant testimony is in shambles. It is the “cancer of the soul”, and it claims millions of victims each year. It spreads faster than the common cold and threatens the survival of many churches.
- 2.15.3. Yet there is a cure for this plague. One of the most beautiful words in any language is the word “forgive.”
- 2.15.4. **Again**, to forgive means “to give someone a release from the wrong that he has done to you”, & “to give up any right of retaliation”.
- 2.15.5. When God forgives He forgives completely. This kind of forgiveness is “Judicial Forgiveness”. It is one of 5 kinds of forgiveness in the Bible (we’re going to only look at 3).
- 2.15.6. **A failure to distinguish these kinds of forgiveness causes great confusion, unnecessary guilt and needless fear.**
- 2.16. **[1] Judicial Forgiveness** (God as **Judge**) - The eternal forgiveness of all sins of the one who has trusted Christ. This has to do with the believer’s relationship with God. It is once for all, eternal, and conditioned only on faith in Christ.
- 2.16.1. The Psalmist says, **“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him.”** (Ps. 32:1,2 NIV)

- 2.17. **[2] Paternal Forgiveness**(God as *Father*) - Restoration of fellowship with God the Father after the believer has broken fellowship by continued, unconfessed sin. This has to do with the believer's fellowship with God.
- 2.17.1. The conditions to this kind of forgiveness are twofold:
- (a) **Confession of sin** - 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- (b) **Forgiveness of others** - Personal forgiveness (described next)
- 2.18. **[3] Personal Forgiveness** - Restoration of fellowship with another human being.
- 2.18.1. (a) This facet of forgiveness is so important that Jesus **conditions our forgiveness** and restoration to **fellowship** with our Heavenly Father on our willingness to forgive others. Matt. 6:14,15 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses".
- 2.18.1.1. Barnes Notes, "If he does not ask forgiveness, yet we are still to treat him kindly; not to harbor malice, not to speak ill of him, to be ready to do him good, & be always prepared to declare him forgiven when he asks it, & if we are not ready & willing to forgive him, we are assured that God will not forgive us."
- 2.18.2. (b) **Personal forgiveness has a vertical dimension** - we must release the person to God. Read Mark 11:24-26
- 2.18.2.1. **Context:** a disciple cannot pray effectively if an **unforgiving** spirit has broken his fellowship w/God.
- 2.18.2.2. We can't automatically infer this is referring to a situation where someone **hasn't** repented to the individual. [we've all been guilty, as believers, of holding to unforgiveness too long]
- 2.18.3. (c) **Personal forgiveness has a horizontal dimension** - we must confront the offender and forgive if he repents. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." Luke 17:3 [Also Mt.5:23,24]
- 2.18.4. What if we don't want to confront? What if I just want to deal w/it w/God? Let's say I am driving away from the church parking lot later today. I back my truck right into your new beautiful Mercedes & **Crunch!** - You are visiting with friends in the parking lot & you hear the noise. Your stomach churns as you see me get out of my truck, look at the damage...& then **bow in prayer!** "Dear Lord, please forgive me for being so preoccupied & clumsy. And please give John grace as he sees the extensive damage I have caused out of sheer negligence. And provide his needs as he takes this car into have it fixed. Thanks, Lord. Amen."
- As I drive away, I wave & smile real big as I yell, "It's all cleared up, John. I claimed the damage before God. Isn't grace wonderful!"

2.18.5. The Savior doesn't say, "Simply pray & I'll forgive you", he says, "Stop praying until you have made things right."

2.19. **UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS?**

2.20. So, what about Jesus' 1st statement on the cross? (Lk.23:34)

2.21. If forgiveness is unconditional, Jesus, Stephen, & others would have forgiven their murderers rather than use this roundabout way to do so.

2.21.1. At other times **Jesus** had no hesitancy in saying, "your sins be forgiven you."

2.21.2. This was **not** a **statement of forgiveness** to their murderers, **but** a **prayer** to their Heavenly Father!

2.21.3. Isn't it unthinkable that Christ could be undergoing the **sufferings** of the cross, **dying** for the sins of His people so as to **forgive them**, & at the very same time ask for forgiveness by **some other means!**⁴

2.22. **FURTHER THOUGHTS ON FORGIVENESS!**

2.23. What about forgiving the **dead** or others with whom you **lost touch**?

2.23.1. You **must not** pray to the dead. **Nor** should you act out some charade by imagining you are talking to them.

2.23.2. What you **can do** is simply tell God your desire to forgive & your determination to rid your heart of all bitterness & resentment toward them. [It's all you **can do**, & all you **need to do**]

2.24. What about when your **wronged by countries**(Nazi Germany) or **denominations**?

2.24.1. Follow the example of dying saints (Acts 7:60) who in imitation of their Lord **prayed for the forgiveness** of their persecutors.

2.24.2. Maybe the Lord would be pleased to bring many of the group to repentance leading to forgiveness.

2.25. What about the **woman** whose husband has left her for another woman; **or**, the **teenager** who was molested as a child by a parent; **or**, The **business man** that was cheated out of a sum of money? Emotionally how do they deal with **no repentance**?

2.25.1. They must surrender their hurts to God & know that all such cases have yet to be tried by what is truly **The Supreme Court!**

2.26. Though I **don't think** you are obligated to forgive an **unrepentant** sinner, we are obligated to **try** to bring them to repentance. All the while entertaining genuine **hope & willingness** to forgive the other, & a desire to be reconciled to him/her.

2.27. "Every effort must be made to win the wrongdoer to repentance, & only when he has exhausted every effort may the effort be abandoned." (Lockyer; pg.86)

⁴ Jay Adams; From Forgiven to Forgiving;pg.29.