

I Am Made For Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very unnatural response to real time pain.

When someone wrongs you and inflicts pain on you physically or emotionally your first response, most of the time isn't ***Colossians 3:13*** which says, ***"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."***

Usually we respond with anger, rage, resentment and pain. That is a natural response to someone who has wronged us. But there is an unnatural response that I want to focus in on this morning. Remember I said forgiveness is a very unnatural response to real time pain.

No one had to teach you how to respond emotionally to pain because it comes out (say it with me) "naturally."

But there is an unnatural reaction to hurt inflicted by someone else and that is **forgiveness**. It's something that you have to work at and develop over time. As followers of Jesus we are commanded to forgive, so we have no choice but to develop this unnatural skill called forgiveness until it becomes second nature to us.

So, the real question here is why would you want to do something so unnatural? Can you think of a time in Jesus' life that people were inflicting both physical and emotional pain onto him and he chose to forgive? Look with me at ***Luke 23:33-34*** ***"When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him, along with criminals-one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."***

Think about it. Jesus was falsely accused and was quickly sentenced in a sham of a hearing and then tortured to the point that he was almost unrecognizable and as he hangs on the cross Jesus says something that offends my fleshly nature. He. Says, "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.***" The worst part of it is the people didn't care, they continued with gambling over his clothes and insulting him.

Jesus is at that moment practicing what he had been teaching his disciples. **Forgiveness means to "release or let go."** Jesus is literally saying as he hangs on the cross "***Father release them, for they do not know what they are doing.***"

So, what are we releasing when someone wrongs us? Jesus uses terms we still use today. He speaks in terms of money and debt. So, to forgive someone is to release them of a debt owed to you. Look with in

Matthew 18:21-35

"A man who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him." Let's stop here for a minute because I don't want you to miss this point. So, suppose you are a day laborer and you earned 300 denarii each year. After 20 years of work you have earned 6000 denarii. That's enough to pay back one talent of the 10,000 talents owed to the king. At that rate it would take you 2,000,000 years to pay the king back in full.

The point here is he was under crushing, never ending, hopeless debt that was impossible to pay back. Let's keep reading.

So, I would say forgiveness is a BIG DEAL to Jesus. It is the cornerstone of Christianity.

So, to be clear here is what forgiveness is not:

- **Ignoring or forgetting**

- **Condoning or excusing**
- **Tolerating or allowing further abuse**
- **Reconciling or restoration**
- **Things go back to the way they were**
- **The offender escapes consequences or justice.**

So, we don't forgive and forget, that's horrible advice. Jesus teaches that we recognize the offense and move forward to forgiveness. Reconciliation isn't the primary goal. It takes two to reconcile but only takes one to forgive. Whether they acknowledge what they did or not isn't the point. It's something you do regardless of what they do. I am sure you have heard it said, "unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies."

Let's look again at ***Matthew 18:34 "In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all that he owed."***

I don't want you to miss this. Your refusal to forgive will imprison you and ultimately be tortured by it because you anger, and emotion will not let you forgive.

Let me illustrate this as I close: this is a story I read this week:

I know a man of 70 who who was once cheated out of a promised retirement bonus 15 years ago. He knows for sure who did it. It was the new V.P. in charge of personnel. Anyone who has spent 15 minutes with him has heard the story. Every taxi driver who had driven more than 2 minutes knows the story. The postman knows it, the woman at the checkout counter knows it. His rage has become his very being. He has become his bitterness. He breathes it, sleeps it, and will probably die from it. The poison has splattered his organs, and ulcer now bleeds

on the lining of his once healthy stomach. He has waited too long if he forgave the man, he would not know who he was. He could still do it, and maybe he will, but his postponement has made it dreadfully hard. Jesus knows holding on to a grudge kills us. The kind of person Jesus is calling us to be is a person who releases the debt and sets us free in the process!