

Biblical Forgiveness Defined

Oct 7, 2018 ~ Luke 17.3-4

1 - The Process of Forgiveness – 14 Words

- **Lk 17.3b** ~ "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."
- Introduce 4 hand gestures actions out these steps
 1. **sin** – right hand vertical – fingers of left hand strike palm – pushed away
 2. **rebuke** - right hand returns to gently touch extended fingers of left hand
 3. **repent** – fingers of left hand drop reflecting contrition
 4. **forgive** – right hand falls from vertical to cover left hand
- Understanding the process of forgiveness is very simple
- Adhering to the process of forgiveness can be very challenging

This is a 4 Point Sermon

1. **The Process of Forgiveness**
2. **Common Process Failures**
3. **Forgiveness FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)**
4. **Closing thoughts on Forgiveness**

2 - Common Process Failures

- **Failure to rebuke**
 1. Give them the silent treatment
 2. Retaliate in kind – MAD (mutually assured destruction)
 3. Rebuke without desire for repentance
- **Refusal to repent**
 1. Refusal to acknowledge the sin
 2. Minimizing the sin / "**no big deal**" (not their choice)
 3. Blameshifting / Only happened because you _____
 - Jesus takes seriously / **Read Mt 18.15ff** c/escalation procedures
- **Refusal to forgive**
 1. Refusing outright to forgive – "**you don't mean it**"
 2. Refusing to "**forget**" / bringing up again and again
 3. Adopt martyr attitude / rubbing nose in it

3 - Forgiveness FAQ

FAQ's can be Useful - Even if they're often only used as marketing tools . . .

Xition: The first of our 13 frequently asked questions about forgiveness . . .

1. "Must I forgive myself for sins I commit against others?"

- "No." / This is modern, man-centered psychobabble – mere "worldly sorrow"
 - Paul said in **2 Cor 7.10** ~ "For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*"
- The truth is man loves himself ~ The Bible assumes self-love
 - Jesus implies it in **Mt 19.19** ~ "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"
 - Paul states it in **Eph 5.28-29** ~ ".. husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it .."
- Men can be self-destructive ~ But it's rooted self-love – not self-loathing
 - **III: Groundhog Day** – "I don't even like myself anymore"
 - We can be very unhappy with ourselves – yet still love ourselves

2. "Should I forgive others their sins against me for my own benefit?"

- "Tricky - Yes and No." / It depends on the benefit you have in mind
- **III:** ~ Studies show that "forgiving" people live longer healthier lives
 - Forgiveness reduces tension, anxiety, anger, depression, and fatigue
 - Letting go of grudges, of vengeful fantasies, is physically good for you
- But "our forgiveness of others" benefits us spiritually
 - **Mt 6.14-15** ~ ".. 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."
 - **Mt 18.34-34** ~ ".. his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."
 - **Mk 11.25-26** ~ "stand praying" / Same statement but different context

3. "Is forgiveness simple and quick or a long, drawn out process?"

- Forgiveness can (and should) be simple and quick
- **III: Woman hates mother** ~ "Dare to Forgive" by Edward Hallowell, MD
 - Woman whose mother was dying came to him for help
 - Successful woman had started her own investment firm in Boston
 - Met for years of psychoanalysis – mother died few months from start
- Our hard hearts make it difficult and drawn out
 - **III: Tabitha's wisdom** ~ **Eph 4.26-27** ~ "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."
 - We are to keep "short accounts" with one another

4. "Is forgiveness something I do unilaterally?"

- "Again - Yes and No." ~ Most forgiveness occurs unilaterally in the heart

- Peter wrote in **1 Pet 4.8** ~ ".. above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."" (Pro 10.12)
 - The question we might ask is, "What sins does, or should, love cover?"
 - Simplest answer is "all possible" / But this differs from person to person
 - **III: "covers of love"** ~ Jay Adams in "From Forgiven to Forgiving"
 - But related to larger sins the Scriptural answer is "No" / process applies
- 5. "Didn't Jesus and Stephen forgive their killers unilaterally?"**
- "No. This is a common misconception." Let's review each instance
 - **Jesus – Luke 23.33-34** ~ ".. when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.""
 - **Stephen – Acts 7.59-60** ~ "they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep."
 - "To whom did Jesus and Stephen address their words?"
 - To God in heaven – not to the men killing them
 - Their forgiveness of their killers was offered up to God – in escrow
- 6. "What about in Mark where when praying an offense is in mind?"**
- **Read Mark 11.25** ~ "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."
 - Hardness of heart – offense was overlooked or already forgiven
 - If it was overlooked yet returns to mind – it must be addressed
- 7. "Must I "forgive and forget" as the saying goes?"**
- "No. This is a common misconception." There is no requirement to "forget"
 - **Jer 31.34** ~ ".. I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more"
 - God doesn't forget – but He chooses to not bring them to remembrance
 - **1 Cor 13.5** ~ "[Love] .. keeps no record of wrongs." [NIV]
 - But this is again different than intentional forgetting
 - **III: IOU** ~ It's not to be brought up to 1) self, to 2) others, or 3) other person
- 8. "Must I trust them just as before because I forgave them?"**
- "No. This is a misconception." This speak to a restoration of the relationship
 - **III: Cheating** ~ "You forgave me. Why don't you trust me?"
 - Restoring trust in a relationship – unlike forgiveness – can take time
 - Hedges must be put in place (*and honored*) to prevent a repeat
- 9. "Must I forgo restitution because I forgave the sin?"**

- "No. This takes forgiveness too far." Forgiveness and restitution are different
- III: Pastor Kayser recently told of lady cheated ~ Men to restore \$ stolen

10. "Must we "forgive God" for ways in which we've perceived He's hurt us?"

- "No. This is to accuse God of sinning against us."
- Type "forgiving God" into Google / many articles and books on topic
 - Some do clarify that God cannot and does not sin
 - But to accept this phrase as legitimate is to accuse God of sin
 - What people must do is "correct their false perception of God"

11. "If forgiveness is granted so easily won't it just encourage them to do it again?"

- "This seems a reasonable concern." This is why Paul addressed it
- **Romans 3.7-8** ~ ".. if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say."
- **Read Rom 5.18 – 6.2** ~ "Therefore, as through .. Certainly not!"
 - Though, through Christ, grace abounds in our day – it came at a high cost

12. "How can I forgive them for the same thing over and over?"

- "Because God said we must." Jesus anticipated this in the next verse
- **Luke 17.4** ~ "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."
- Peter offered that as his generous limit in **Matthew 18**
 - **Mt 18.21-22** ~ "Peter came to Him and said, "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."

13. "Does this process apply to unbelievers as well?"

- "No – though some may adhere to it based on Christian customs."
- Even many professing believers refuse to adopt this forgiveness process
- **Read Rom 12.17-21** ~ "Repay no one evil for evil .. overcome evil with good"
- **Read Mat 5.43-45** ~ "You have heard .. and on the unjust"

4 – Closing Thoughts on Forgiveness

Forgiveness is Divine

- III: ~ "To err is human, to forgive divine"
 - There's far more truth to this statement than is likely first understood
- When we're sinned against we've experienced an injustice
 - As moral beings made in God's image, our hearts cry out for justice
 - As fallen beings our outrage is greater because the injustice is against us

Injustice is Addressed with Vengeance (Judgment)

- "How are acts of injustice addressed by God?" / With vengeance
- Vengeance is "retributive punishment" ~ justice of a particular sort
- Modernists think vengeance is beneath the dignity of a "civilized society"
- God and His Word have no such compunctions
- Quotes from Old Testament
 - Is 35.4 ~ "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you."
 - Ez 25.14 ~ "I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people"
 - Last week's CM from Habakkuk's c/prayer for justice – Chaldean invasion
- A quote from the New Testament
 - 2 Thess 1.6-8 ~ ".. it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Forgiveness is Divine / It is Abnormal / It is Supernatural

- Let's review the simplicity of the process again
- "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him"
- "What does it take to rebuke your brother?"
 - To do it at all takes courage
 - To do it well takes compassion and tact
- "What does it take to repent when rebuked?"
 - It takes a great deal of humility
 - We must own our sin / Not deny it, minimize it, or blame it on others
- "What does it take to forgive the offense when asked to?"
 - It takes a readiness and willingness that can only come from God
 - Psalm 86.5 ~ "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."

No one deserves forgiveness / Forgiveness is an affront to justice
Forgiveness displaces vengeance / Forgiveness is rooted in divine love
But forgiving others is what God expects of His children

Jude 24-25 ~ "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen."

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IF your brother sins against you, rebuke him;
and **if** he repents, forgive him.

— sin —
— rebuke —
— repent —
— forgive —

Process failures

1. Failure to rebuke

- i _____
- ii _____
- iii _____

2. Refusal to repent

- i _____
- ii _____
- iii _____

3. Refusal to forgive

- i _____
- ii _____
- iii _____

FAQ

- To rebuke someone takes _____ & _____
- To repent takes _____
- To forgive takes _____ that comes from God

1. Must I forgive myself?
2. Should I forgive for my own benefit?
3. Is forgiveness simple and quick?
4. Is forgiveness a unilateral action?
5. Didn't Jesus & Stephen forgive their killers?
6. What about when offense comes to mind in prayer?
7. Must I "forgive and forget"?
8. Because I forgave them, must I trust them?
9. Because I forgave them, must I forego restitution?
10. Must we "forgive God"?
11. If it's so easy, won't they just do it again?
12. How can I forgive them over & over?
13. Does this apply to unbelievers?

"To err is human, to forgive _____."

What is vengeance? _____

In Psalm 86:5 the Lord is good and _____ to _____.