

Forgiveness (3)
Forgiving Others
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Introduction: How do I know if I am really living the Christian life?

- A. Often we mistakenly check first on the externals. (**Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13**)
 - 1. While the externals have a place in identifying the condition of our hearts, we must always look at our hearts first! (**Mt 23:25-26**)
 - 2. Why do we often fail here? Because it is easier to use externals as a mask.
 - 3. Please do not find comfort with the position that denies a place for externals! (**Mt 23:23**)
- B. I cannot think of any greater tests of our heart than the one of forgiving others.
 - 1. I ask that you listen with absolute honesty.
 - 2. If we do not see our need here, we will in time become like the Pharisees.

I. What is forgiveness?

- A. We know it is like love in that it comes from the character of God. (**1 Jn 4:19; Mt 6:12,14-15**)
 - 1. When we define forgiveness as God does then we will know!
 - 2. Do you know the forgiveness of God?
- B. What is God's forgiveness like?
 - 1. God blots out our sins! (**Acts 3:19**)
 - 2. God does not remember our sins any more. (**Heb 8:12**)
 - 3. God receives us back to a full fellowship. (**Lk 15:20-24**)

II. Genuine forgiveness is truly difficult

- A. In real forgiveness you take the loss or hurt and write it off.
 - 1. We are a people who do not want to be cheated! It is with the utmost difficulty that we let go of a real debt!
 - 2. Before you try to justify your holy war over your hurts ask this question: " What if God treated my debt to Him as I am treating others?" (**Mt 18:23-35**)
 - 3. Notice the great emphasis of the scriptures here. (**Mt 6:14-15, 18:35**)
- B. Humility is a must for one to truly forgive. (**Col 3:12-13**)
 - 1. A proud person will pursue the one who injured him for as long as it takes!
 - 2. In humility we recognize who we really are. Let go!
- C. Self-deception is very strong when it comes to forgiveness. (**Jas 1:26**)
 - 1. We can say we "forgive" while at the same time harbor bitterness in our hearts.
 - 2. Even though we say the right words, it is plain to others that we have a vendetta.
- D. Things which men substitute for forgiveness.
 - 1. **To ignore both the wrong done and the person who did it.**
 - a. If we can by love cover a fault then all is well. (**1 Pt 4:8**)
 - b. But if we bury a hurt and then snub and avoid another, we are in trouble.
 - 2. **To go by the "eye for an eye" approach.** After I get even then all is well!
 - 3. **To put the person on probation.**
 - a. I will forgive you but if you do this again...be extra good or else!
 - b. We may think we have forgiven but in truth we have not! What is

forgiveness? (**Heb 8:12**)

III. The hard road of the unforgiving heart.

- A. The unforgiving lives a life of pain.
 - 1. They think if they forgive that they will be cheated. In truth they have taken a road far harder than anything God would put us through. (**Deut 6:24**)
 - 2. Over time the unforgiving heart becomes a hardened heart. (**Eph 4:19,32**)
 - 3. When the desire for revenge pushes out the love of God it will be replaced with bitterness and anger. They are relentless masters.
 - 4. In time you will act like a crazy person! You may know the right words to speak and wear your mask often, but your heart will be revealed! Consider the examples of the Pharisees. (**Mk 15:10; Jn 18:28**)
- B. The family of the unforgiving pays a high price.
 - 1. In the family of the unforgiving you must line up or be punished. You are not allowed to point out the obvious.
 - 2. To have association with the unforgiving you must shun who they shun, participate in the "critical talk" they talk or be cut off.
 - 3. This taught bitterness and unreasonableness is common in those who are alcoholics and other kinds of addicts.
 - 4. It is better for a young Christian in such a home to seek to separate from that influence as soon as possible.
- C. The church of one who is unforgiving also pays a price. (**Heb 12:14-15**)
 - 1. Most church problems have their origins here.
 - 2. Forgiving people pursue peace. Unforgiving people pursue allies.
- D. The unforgiving and their allies will go to hell. (**Mt 18:35; Jas 2:13**)
 - 1. It is not enough to say: "I have been bitter." You need to make it right!
 - 2. King Saul occasionally admitted his wrong but never repented. (**1 Sam 24:17-19**)
 - 3. I believe that the driving force behind liberalism are those who have not dealt with their hurts and therefore want "no more conflict." Here they want to run and hide!

IV. The healing power of genuine forgiveness

- A. Forgiveness releases us from unnecessary burdens! (**Mt 11:28-30**)
- B. Forgiveness restores relationships! (**Col 3:12-13**)
- C. Forgiveness lets us partake of the character of God! (**2 Pt 1:4**)

Conclusion: Do you know the joy and power of God's forgiveness?

- A. A Test to determine if we have forgiven
 - 1. Do we get pleasure in their hurt?
 - 2. Do we intentionally avoid being in their presence?
 - 3. Do we vividly remember what we have suffered?
 - 4. Are we uncomfortable when they are praised?
 - 5. Do we go out of the way to be helpful to that person?
 - 6. Are we willing to pray for the person. (**Mt 5:43-45**)
- B. Is this hard? Yes! But it is God's will and we can do it!