

How does love help us forgive others?

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Introduction: One of the greatest challenges we will face is when a brother has hurt us.

A. It is *no small thing* to have a problem in either giving or receiving forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is a product of the love of God and is the basis of having a relationship with God.

2. Without this understanding and realization of how the love of God acts towards us, we will not be able to work with our brethren! **(Jn 13:34-35)**

B. Our most basic perceptions are affected by this! **(2 Pt 1:9)**

I. Many of our problems in a local church can be traced back to a failure to forgive

1. Have you heard of brethren that would have nothing to do with one another?
(1 Jn 3:14-16)

2. Do you have animosity (hatred) for various people who have done you wrong?

3. Until we learn to get out of ourselves then these things are impossible.

4. Will you be “cheated” by showing mercy and longsuffering?

5. There is a wonderful burden lifted when you are no longer thinking this way.

6. Going from a child to being a parent gives us perspective!

C. We must develop an attitude of forgiveness.

1. Why did Jesus and Stephen pray for forgiveness of those in sin?
(Lk 23:34; Acts 7:60)

2. Did they receive forgiveness without any repentance in their own hearts?

3. No, they were later given opportunities to repent. **(Acts 2:36-38)**

4. Can we release our desire for personal vengeance and give it to God under all circumstances? **(Rom 12:19-21)**

5. This goes against every instinct the world has taught us. Our failure to learn this will *guarantee a defeated life*.

6. This is a must for us to move forward in a life of faith! **(Phil 3:13-14)**

7. Without it we will be burdened and will be enslaved to past hurts.

II. Are we honest with God and ourselves when we say we have forgiven others?

A. What does forgiveness mean to God?

1. He blots out our sins! **(Acts 3:19; Isa 43:25)**

2. God does not remember our sins any more. **(Heb 8:12)**

a. He is described as casting them into the sea. **(Micah 7:18-19)**

b. When God forgives our sin is long gone! Do you believe this?

c. "When God buries our sins in the deepest sea, He posts a sign which reads: No Fishing!"

3. God receives us back to a full fellowship. **(Lk 15:20-24)**

a. There is no grudge holding with God. Men are another matter!

b. Our biggest problem is in believing this.

B. What do we mean? This is where the deceitful heart can do the most damage.

1. “I will forgive you but I do not have to like you.” **(1 Jn 3:18-19; 1 Pt 1:22; 2:1)**

2. The church is not a social club to cater to your social needs. It is a group of people who have been crushed by their own sin and have the forgiving love of God as their only bond.

C. How do I know if I have forgiven another? Here is a test.

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?

III. We must learn how to forgive others

A. When the Lord tells us to “put on” something, we are dealing with a learning, growing process. **(Col 3:12-15)**

1. I have seen is where brethren separate themselves under the banner of the “grace of God” by planting bitterness and strife in the hearts of their disciples.
2. God’s love helps us to work out our problems. **(James 3:17-18)**

C. How can I develop a greater love for God? Do you remember you are forgiven?

1. Consider the parable Jesus used to open the heart of a Pharisee. **(Lk 7:40-43)**
2. Let you and I answer the question. Who loves more? The one forgiven more!
3. How much have you been forgiven? **(Lk 7:47)**

IV. Two men respond to those who have hurt them

A. The first man decides that he will follow the “common sense” of the world.

1. He will take hurts personally and dwells on them.
2. He will seek a broader personal attack on the “transgressor.”
3. Human standards are sought – “eye for eye”; “probation”; “a time of exile.”
4. The fault is never forgotten and can be quickly brought up if “needed.”

B. The first man will in time experience problems with his relationships. **(Jas 3:14-16)**

1. He will live in a world of “throw-away people.”
2. He will learn to trust no one and those that know him will learn not to trust him!

C. The second man decides to follow the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus.

1. Any faults he sees in others he first remembers what Jesus did for him. **(1 Tim 1:15-16)**
2. He wants to restore the offender’s relationship to God and the relationship to himself. **(2 Cor 2:7-8, 11)**
3. He lets the past go and has confidence in future path of his brother. **(2 Cor 2:3-4; 2 Thess 3:4; Philemon 1:21)**
4. He will find his marriage, his children, his brethren and his friends to be blessed by his being a “son of encouragement.” **(Acts 4:36)**
5. His hurts become an opportunity to build a stronger faith and come even closer to God. **(Job 42:5-6; Ps 51:16-17)**

Conclusion: Which man are you?