



CHRISTIANITY Q&A

"What Do We Mean by Forgiveness?" Matthew 18:21-35

No. 5074

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Apparently Peter was frustrated when he asked Jesus, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother?" Forgiveness is an integral part of Christian experience; so Peter was right to ask for help. Many of us need help with forgiveness, too.

I. The Demands of Forgiveness.

- A. The demands of Christ's teaching. Luke 17:1-10
 - 1. Relationships are full of difficulties.
 - 2. Responsibility for action must be accepted.
 - 3. Reactions must be carefully watched—they may be sinful.
 - 4. Responses include rebuking and forgiving.

Note: The place of faith (vv. 5-6) and duty (vv. 7-10).
- B. The demands of Christ's example. Luke 7:36-50
 - 1. Concern about people's brokenness.
 - 2. Compassion for people's helplessness.
 - 3. Commitment to people's wholeness.
- C. The demands of Christ's analogy. Matthew 18:21-35
 - 1. The linkage of being forgiven and being forgiving.
 - a. To receive but not give is immoral.
 - b. To request but deny is impossible. See Matthew 6:12
 - 2. The logic of being forgiven and being forgiving.
 - a. The immensity of man's debt to God.
 - b. The wonder of God's grace to man.
 - c. The relative magnitude of man's debt to man.
 - d. The necessity of man's forgiveness of his fellow.

II. The Difficulties of Forgiveness.

- A. The difficulty of experiencing forgiveness. See Psalm 32:1-5
 - 1. Recognition of unhappiness.
 - 2. Reluctance to identify cause.
 - 3. Refusal to acknowledge sin.

But note how all this is changed.
- B. The difficulty of offering forgiveness.
 - 1. Inadequate understanding of divine forgiveness.
 - 2. Inappropriate handling of personal trauma.
 - a. Holding the other person responsible.
 - b. Making them pay.
 - c. Getting even.
- C. The difficulty of applying forgiveness.
 - 1. When the offender is unrepentant and unreceptive.
 - 2. When we confuse forgiving and forgetting.

III. The Delights of Forgiveness.

- A. The delight of being a blessing.
 - 1. Setting someone free to live again.
 - 2. Letting someone know they're loved again.
- B. The delight of being blessed.
 - 1. The spiritual uplift.
 - 2. The emotional release.
 - 3. The physical renewal.