

Forgiveness

QUESTION: Do we only have to forgive if someone REPENTS or ASKS for forgiveness?

- **Luke 17:3-4** "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, **rebuke him; and if he repents**, forgive him. 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."
- **Read Matthew 18:15-35** "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a [crooked] tax collector. (Verses 21-22) "Then 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.'"
- **Mark 11:25** "And whenever you stand praying, **if you have ANYTHING against anyone (any RESENTMENT), FORGIVE him**, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

ANSWER: In these scripture passages, Jesus is speaking about **different circumstances** where we are commanded to forgive.

1.) In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus is talking about a person who is committing sin openly, that people know about, and that is hurting the reputation and work of the church. If Christians are allowed to REMAIN in rebellion and sin, without repenting, it severely hurts the church. These steps are given for restoration and FORGIVENESS of the disobedient "brother" if he repents, or to have him removed from the church fellowship if he WILL NOT REPENT.

2.) The passages in Luke 17 and Matt. 18:21-22 are speaking more of someone who has HURT you PERSONALLY. This would **not** be a cause for someone to be removed from the church. However, bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness between individual members in the Body of Christ HURTS the church, although in a more subtle way (see I Cor. 12:25-27).

3.) In Matt. 18:21-22 and Mark 11:25, we have situations where the offender is **not** asking for forgiveness, and this is what we run into the most in 12-Step Recovery. Sometimes, **we have to FORGIVE people who DON'T KNOW, or WON'T ADMIT, that they have done anything wrong.** Either because of denial or rebellion, they will not repent, because they don't think there is anything to repent of. Meanwhile, **what do YOU do with those HURT FEELINGS, ANGER, FRUSTRATION, and RESENTMENT?** Ephesians 4:26-32 tells us to **GET RID of ALL bitterness and resentment**, which is just another way of saying unforgiveness. Hebrews 12:15 tells us NOT to allow a root of bitterness to GROW in us and defile us. If we had to **WAIT for someone to ASK for our forgiveness, how could we OBEY God's command to forgive** and not hold onto bitterness? Obviously, if a person comes to you and ASKS for forgiveness, you are to forgive, and forgive AS MANY TIMES as God forgives YOU! The number "seventy times seven" is NOT to be taken literally, but is to give us an IDEA of HOW MANY TIMES we must forgive others, because GOD FORGIVES US so many times every day! **The good news** is that **God Himself provides the POWER and LOVE** necessary for us to forgive others, especially those who do not ask for forgiveness and are not sorry for what they have done. God's word says in Romans 5:5, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the **LOVE of GOD** has been **poured out in our HEARTS** by the **HOLY SPIRIT** who was **given to us**," and in Philippians 2:13, "**It is GOD who WORKS IN YOU** both to will and to DO for His good pleasure."

- **Hebrews 12:14-15** "Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any **root of BITTERNESS springing up cause TROUBLE**, and by this **MANY become DEFILED**." Bitterness hurts MANY MORE people than just the one who is bitter. Many family dysfunctions and generational sins **began as a ROOT of BITTERNESS** in someone's life, which then passed down to their family in the form of more DYSFUNCTIONS, ADDICTIONS, and other problems ("many become defiled"). As you do a thorough inventory in **Step 4**, and confess it all to God, yourself, and one trusted person in **Step 5**, you BEGIN the process that can STOP this vicious cycle in your own life, and keep it from passing down to your children. In **Steps 8 & 9**, you will complete the FORGIVENESS part for the PAST. In **Step 10**, as you do a DAILY inventory, you will learn to keep track of resentments, and FORGIVE quickly, so that a ROOT of BITTERNESS does not start growing again.
- **Ephesians 4:26-27 & 30-32** "Be **ANGRY and do not sin**; do not let the **sun go down on your wrath**, nor GIVE PLACE to the **devil**. And do not **GRIEVE the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all **BITTERNESS**, wrath, ANGER, clamor, and all EVIL SPEAKING be **put away from you**, with all malice. And be **KIND** to one another, **tenderhearted, FORGIVING** one another, just as **God in Christ also forgave you**."

QUESTION: How can we be ANGRY and yet NOT sin?

ANSWER: Jesus is our example - He could be ANGRY and not sin, because His anger was not SELFISH. His anger was always towards those who were corrupting God's message and hindering people from coming to God (see also John 2:13-17; Luke 19:45-46). We, on the other hand, usually get angry because someone has done something that HURTS US, or INCONVENIENCES US, or threatens OUR RIGHTS, or for some other SELFISH reason. Then, we tend to HOLD ONTO that anger, and it turns into bitterness and resentment, and that leads to more sin.

- **Mark 3:5** "So when He (Jesus) had looked around them **with ANGER**, being **GRIEVED** by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."

Definition: "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath" - This means to **LET GO of all anger**, and **FORGIVE before the end of the day**, or as soon as possible. If your anger is **not** against a PERSON, but rather against CIRCUMSTANCES, the Lord COMMANDS us in His word to "REJOICE always and give THANKS in everything, in all circumstances" (I Thess. 5:16-18).

Definition: "GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL" - This means DON'T give the devil an **opportunity** to cause **TROUBLE** in your life. Holding onto anger and resentments and letting those FEELINGS turn into BITTERNESS and UNFORGIVENESS is a sure way to ALLOW Satan to MESS UP your life.

- **I Peter 5:8-9** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary (enemy) the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom (looking for someone) he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith..."
- **II Corinthians 2:10-11** "Now whom you FORGIVE anything, I also FORGIVE. For if indeed I have FORGIVEN anything, I have FORGIVEN that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, **lest SATAN should take advantage of us**; for we are not ignorant of his devices (tricks)."
Definition: "GRIEVE the Holy Spirit" - The Holy Spirit is a PERSON. When we SIN by holding onto anger and bitterness, it GRIEVES Him (makes Him sad) and BREAKS the FELLOWSHIP (communion - II Cor. 13:14) that we have with Him as our Helper and Comforter. To RESTORE that broken fellowship with God, repent and confess your sin according to **I John 1:9** "If we CONFESS our

- sins, He is faithful and just **to FORGIVE us our sins**, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- **Colossians 3:12-13** "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering (patience); bearing with one another, and **FORGIVING one another**, if anyone has a COMPLAINT against another; **even as CHRIST FORGAVE YOU**, so YOU also MUST DO."

Read the following scriptures to see HOW FORGIVING God is towards us:

- **Psalm 86:5 & 15** "For Thou, Lord, art GOOD, and **READY to FORGIVE**; and PLENTEOUS IN MERCY unto all them that call upon Thee." "But Thou, O Lord, art a God FULL of COMPASSION, and GRACIOUS, LONG-SUFFERING, and PLENTEOUS IN MERCY and TRUTH."
- **Psalm 51:1** "Have MERCY upon me, O God, according to Your LOVING-KINDNESS, according unto the multitude of **Your TENDER MERCIES BLOT OUT my transgressions.**"
- **Hebrews 10:16-17** "'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,' says the Lord. 'I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, '**Their SINS and their lawless DEEDS I will REMEMBER NO MORE.**'"
- **Colossians 2:13-14** "And you, being dead in your TRESPASSES (sins) and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He made alive together with Him, **having FORGIVEN you ALL trespasses; BLOTTING OUT** the handwriting of REQUIREMENTS (God's laws that we can never keep) that was against us, and took it out of the way, having nailed it to His cross."
- **Titus 3:3-6** "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the KINDNESS and the LOVE of GOD our Savior toward man appeared, **NOT** by works of righteousness which we have done, but **according to His MERCY He saved us**, by the washing of regeneration (being born again) and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us ABUNDANTLY through Jesus Christ our Savior."
- **Romans 5:8** "But God demonstrates **His own love toward us**, in that **while we were STILL SINNERS**, Christ died for us."