

## **FORGIVENESS** – Jason Reed

Few deny the importance of forgiveness yet few understand what forgiveness is or even how to forgive. An offender will frequently ask another to forgive what they have done to or against them and many times that request is granted. The offender walks away believing they have done what is the right but seldom does that do anything positive for the offended. The hurt, the anger, the pain remains and impacts every part of that person's life and the lives of those around them.

Rob Morriset helps us see a biblical definition in his article 'Forgiving Our Debtors'.

One day the Lord showed me a definition of forgiveness I had never fully seen before. It comes from the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:12 "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". When we have unforgiveness in our heart toward another, we are holding that person in debt. Thus, when we truly forgive we proclaim, "I've canceled your debt. You don't owe me any longer."

When someone is in debt to us through unforgiveness, our heart records what the person owes. Not only what is owed gets stored in our hearts; so do the hurts and negative messages associated with the debt. These don't go away until the debt is paid in full.

Let me illustrate. A father promises his son he will leave work early to take him to a baseball game. After school the boy excitedly waits by the front door for Dad to show up. Dad never calls. The boy is terribly disappointed, especially as he's told all his friends about the trip.

When Dad comes home, he fails to acknowledge his son's hurt and brushes the subject off. The son feels rejected and the message is written in his heart: "I'm not important." Since this isn't the first time Dad has done something like this, the son is likely to be tempted to build up resentment and unforgiveness toward his father. In his heart, the unforgiveness says, "Dad owes me to keep his promise and to admit he did wrong to me." Because the son now holds his father in debt to himself, the event, the feelings and the message are stored in his heart, never to go away until there is forgiveness. Time goes on and this unresolved issue is buried with other similar issues - forgotten but still there. Later in life the son finds himself overreacting when people don't come through on their promises, and experiencing angry rages and depression. Why? Because the feelings and messages are still strongly alive within his heart and tapped into when the circumstances are right.

In those unforgiving areas of our heart we are not only holding someone in debt to us, but we are also unable to receive what we really need in each area: affirmation, love, positive words, comfort - whatever is "owed" us. Rather than receive positive messages, our heart is more likely to receive messages in line with the negative ones written there through unforgiveness.

When the Lord wants to come and pour His love and healing into our hurt, we are unable to receive the very thing we long for because through unforgiveness we are still waiting for those who hurt us to pay up, to come through.

Our goal in this teaching will be to look at how the scripture defines forgiveness, particularly as Jesus defines forgiveness as 'cancelling debt' in Matthew 18. We need to see that we cannot forgive an event – the words or actions that created the problem. We must identify the debt that occurred from the offense and then, cancel that debt.

We will look at 6 things from the life of Joseph in Genesis 45 that need to occur for total forgiveness to take place and the results that occur from biblical forgiveness . An amazing emotional, spiritual, and at times even physical healing comes when people are set free from this debtor's prison. (Sourced from R. T. Kendall's book 'Total Forgiveness')

### **Confession; Repentance; Restitution**

An overlooked part of forgiveness is seeing our own responsibility for healing the hurts of those around us that our own sin and unforgiveness has caused, often to those who are closest to us. **Confessing** our bitterness and anger as sin; **Repenting** of and forsaking the resulting attitudes and behaviors; **Making restitution** by acknowledging the debt of pain and hurt that we incurred and asking those we offended if they can possibly find a place in their hearts to forgive us.

We have abandoned personal and relational restoration, peace and joy by not understanding the power of forgiveness and the ensuing steps to freedom.