

Healing Power of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is at the heart of the Gospel. It was mentioned often by Jesus Christ. The beginning of healing is forgiveness and unforgiveness can block the healing process. Forgiveness is not only crucial to ministry, but to one's own personal healing and transformation. In moving forward towards this transformation, any patterns in the family tree can be prevented by forgiveness. The Church is strong on forgiveness, but weak on practical instruction on how to do this. When we do not forgive someone, we become "bound" to them. When we pray for our enemies, we begin to love them. Forgiveness is a process. The act of forgiveness offends our sense of fairness. Jesus Christ is the best illustration of living at a high level of forgiveness in the face of personal offense. Forgiveness is distinct from the legal, pardoning act of justice. Forgiveness requires us to be touched by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

I. Mt. 18: 21-35

A. Peter raises the question about forgiveness. It is so "anti-cultural" to him and the others. 70 x7 means unlimited forgiveness. It expresses a willingness to forgive.

B. vv. 23-24-servants are debtors. The servant's situation is dire and is bound to the response of the king.

C. vv. 25-27-The debt owed required a punishment that the whole family was to be sold into slavery. Yet the master, the king, is moved with compassion.

D. vv. 28-30-The king's mercy is outstanding. This is in contrast to the servant who is cruel to those who owed him money.

E. vv. 31-34-The servant is delivered up to torturers.

F. v. 35-Jesus emphasizes in the Lord's prayer, Mt. 6:9ff. 5;38-48.

II. Principles of forgiveness

A. Why we find it difficult to forgive?

1. Our fallen nature
2. We absorb generational patterns of revenge in our families
3. We think forgiveness is a feeling.
4. We think forgiveness overlooks justice.
5. To forgive someone we think is weak.

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B. When I pray for my enemy and bless those who curse me, I begin to love my enemy because the power of the Holy Spirit transforms my heart.

1. To refuse to forgive, I remain bound to the people who have hurt me.
2. See Lk. 4:16ff.
3. To pray for my enemies so to forgive them and release them to God's care.
4. A major block to healing is unforgiveness.

C. Harmful effects of unforgiveness.

1. Sin, by its nature separates us from God. Unforgiveness imprisons the one who refuses to forgive. To do so, we block the flow of the Lord's blessings (including forgiveness) in our life.
2. Unforgiveness affects our physical health (heart disease, weakened immune system).
3. Emotional disturbances such as anxiety, mood swings, etc..
4. Prolong unforgiveness opens us up to demonic spirits that seek to oppress us and keep us bound and unfree.
5. There is a vital relationship between body-soul-spirit-emotions
6. Resentment means to "feel again". This keeps us in bondage
To the past.

D. We make the decision to receive forgiveness and grace due to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We make the human decision to Forgive as an act of obedience to God's command.

III. Conclusion

A. When praying with someone who needs to forgive, we don't "convict" them of their unforgiveness. The Holy Spirit does this.

B. Forgiveness of another is a process, like "peeling" an onion.

One should see gradual progress of interior freedom, joy and peace. As you are being healed, the wounds of the past are no longer part of your life story.

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IV. Suggested practical way to forgive

- A. First receive the Lord's forgiveness for you holding onto resentments.
- B. Present the person to the Lord in prayer. Acknowledge the hurt. Forgive by saying "Lord, I forgive this person (name) for what they did (mention the specific things)
- C. Bless the person with good things: health, prosperity, etc...
- D. Ask the Lord to heal your hurt.
- E. Thank the Lord for what he is doing.