

Prayer Instruction: Forgive Us Our Sins as We Forgive Others – Matthew 6:12

Mel Dahlgren – South Bay Christian Church – March 7, 2020

Forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself when you give it to others. Forgiveness has two words in the New Testament: one means “to send away” and the other means “to show favor, or to pardon” This act changes us in a miraculous way. I like to call it “the freedom of forgiveness.”

Perhaps you’ve been lied to, insulted, stolen from, cheated, physically hurt, verbally abused, or a host of other things that people do to each other. Forgiveness frees us from the added pain we experience by refusing to forgive. Not forgiving tightens the chains of bitterness and grief. I am absolutely not saying you should stay in abusive situations. That’s a whole different topic. But our attitude when these things do happen is critical. The shackles of your hurtful experiences aren’t ones you have to wear for the rest of your life. Those natural but unnecessary shackles are merely the bonds of unforgiveness. When we forgive we become **free** from anger, hatred, and all the negative feelings God is opposed to and why he commands us to “love our enemies” and to forgive 70x7. Matthew 18:21-22

This freedom is God’s gift to us for forgiving our enemies.

“What is forgiveness? It is the odor the flowers give off when they are trampled upon.”
Anonymous

A true story of how God’s forgiveness can change us:

Story: John Newton in 1743, a slave trader, kidnapping African men, women and children packing them into a cargo ship chained to posts, forced to endure a tortuous journey for weeks across the sea. Many died on the way while others went insane trapped inside the cargo hold. He then sold them into a lifetime of slavery loading his ship again and again. Kidnapping. Torture. Murder. Forced slavery. Cruel and brutal and didn’t care.

Then, in 1748, during a violent storm at sea, John Newton came face-to-face with death in what appeared to be a sinking ship. He prayed and God delivered him which began his gradual conversion to Christianity.

Despite this, he continued to participate in the Slave Trade. In 1750, he made a further voyage as master of the slave ship 'Duke of Argyle' and two voyages on the 'African'. He admitted that he was a ruthless businessman and an unfeeling observer of the Africans he traded. Slave revolts on board ship were frequent. Newton mounted guns and muskets on the deck aimed at the slaves' quarters. Slaves were lashed and put in thumbscrews to keep them quiet. Later in 1750 he suffered a violent fever on a ship to the West Indies and begged God for mercy. This he claims was the turning point in his life. Four years later he gave up slave trading in 1754 after another serious illness.

John Newton experienced God's forgiveness in the midst of all these crimes and slowly was transformed in every aspect of his life. Once hateful and cruel, he became thoughtful and kind. Once opposed to anything Christian, he himself became a minister working tirelessly to make the slave trade illegal in Great Britain. Even became a Christian song writer who wrote the now famous words, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."

This is what forgiveness can do to us and anyone who is willing to obey God's command to forgive our enemies.

Example of Jesus' forgiveness for us to follow:

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." That was Jesus prayer while he was being crucified.

John 8:1-11-Jesus said after forgiving the adulterous woman, "Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more." Jesus commands us to stop sinning once we accept his forgiveness.

Resentment: Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, never harbored resentment. One time a friend recalled to her a cruel thing that happened to her some years previously, but Clara seemed not to remember it. "Don't you remember the wrong that was done to you?" asked the friend. "No," answered Clara. "I distinctly remember forgetting that." "Resentment is far more responsible for burnout than overwork."

How to Beat Burnout. Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive. CS Lewis. **How willing are you willing to forgive?**