

Improving Your Serve

Lesson 5

Ps. 103:1-5, 10-12; Matt 5:23-24

The Servant As A Forgiver – Part 1

Our lesson on forgiveness opens with a quote from “Improving Your Serve”. In the opening statement of this new chapter, Chuck Swindoll comes straight to the point and says “**Forgiveness is NOT an elective in the curriculum of Servanthood. IT IS A REQUIRED COURSE.**” Then he continues that statement by saying “**and the exams are always tough to pass.**” That rang a bell with me because I believe forgiveness is the foundation of our faith, it is grace wrapped up in a tangible way to touch people. It is how we put dignity into our everyday living. So, if my service to God is predicated on forgiveness, what is “**Forgiveness**”? I found this great definition for forgiveness in a little booklet by Dick Tripp, entitled “What is Forgiveness and Why does it Matter?” In the booklet he treats the dilemma of forgiveness with spiritual skill and competence challenging every believers understanding of true forgiveness. Let look at this profound description of forgiveness.

“**Forgiveness is the miracle of a new beginning.** It is to start where we are, not where we wish we were, or the other person was. It is to hold out a hand; to want to renew a friendship; to want a new relationship with husband, father, daughter, friend, or indeed an enemy. It may not take away the hurt. It does not deny the past injury. It does not ignore the possibility and need for repentance and a change in the relationship. It means being willing to take the initiative in dealing with any barriers that I may be raising towards a restored relationship. It means that I am willing to have a relationship with the other party that is based on Christian love and not on what has happened in the past, if the response of the other person makes that possible.”

If we take the above definition as true then forgiveness:

- Is not based on how I feel - **John 13:34-35**
- Is not forget the offense happened - **Matthew 18:21-22**
- Is not acting as if the hurt doesn't matter - **Colossians 3:13**

- Is not allowing the offender to deny responsibility - **Matthew 18:26-27**
- Is not being free of anger - **Ephesians 4:26**
- Is not denying feeling like getting revenge - **Lev 19:18**
- Is not accepting peace at any price - **Rom 12:18**

I. Why We Need Forgiveness!

Forgiveness is one of the most difficult and powerful spiritual duties the servant will ever participate in. It demands that we let go of our hurt, anger, bitterness, hatred and sometimes even our rights. The accomplishment of "**letting go**" has three outcomes.

- 1) It sets the offender free by extending the gift of reconciliation and provides a way out of the guilt and shame associated with the offense.
- 2) It sets the forgiver free from the emotional turmoil associated with the offense, allows the forgiver to get closure and it empowers the forgiver to move on with life.
- 3) It sets God free to forgive us.

“God will not be ready to hear us, unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness to those who have offended us.... Those who refuse to forgive the injuries which have been done to them, devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and knowingly prevent God from forgiving them.” *John Calvin*

II. God’s Forgiveness of Us

According to **(Ps. 103:1-5)**, to fully appreciate God forgiveness we must first recognize God’s goodness by not forgetting His benefits.

- Forgives all our sin [v3]
- Heal all our diseases [v3]
- Redeems our lives from destruction(saves us) [v4]

- Surround us with loving kindness and tender mercy [v4]
- He fills our lives with good things [v5]
- He renews us so that we stay young and strong like the eagle [v5]

According to **(Ps. 103:10-12)** God's forgiveness has accomplished for us what we could not do for ourselves.

- God has not punished us as we deserve [v10]
- God has granted us unlimited mercy [v11]
- God has removed our sin and does not remember it. [v12]

III. **Our Forgiveness of One Another**

In examining our forgiving of one another, there are only two possibilities we are either the offender or the offended and in either case forgiveness is required. **Eph 4:31-32**, explains God's expected response of His servant.

- We should not be persuaded or controlled our emotions or hatred [v31]
- We should be kind, compassionate and forgiving [v32]

- **When You Are The Offender**

Matt 5:23-24 clearly states that we must approach God's altar, even to give, with a clear conscience. When we discover that we do not meet that qualification Jesus outlines God's procedure for a servant to follow when we have offended another person.

1. What did Jesus mean in verse 24 by “Leave your gift before the altar?”

2. What did Jesus mean in verse 24 by “Go your way?”

3. What did Jesus mean in verse 24 by “First be reconciled to your brother?”

4. What did Jesus mean in verse 24 by “Then come and offer your gift?”
