The Servant As A Forgetter

Our lesson on “FORGIVENESS” now extends our study to forgetting. It’s important to understand that there is a spiritual correlation between forgiving and forgetting. Moreover, “forgiveness” is a prerequisite to forgetting. For the Christian, every offense will eventually bring us to a critical decision point: Do I want to move on or will I just go on reliving this pain? At some point the question becomes, “Is it possible to really forgive and forget?” After all, can I with a servant’s heart honestly say, “I will forgive, but I will never forget?”

In our lesson, Chuck Swindoll helps us to understand that forgetting is so intertwined with forgiving that refusing to forget can have even greater consequences on our ability to move on with our lives than just saying, “I forgive you.” While we’ve all heard the old adage “forgive and forget” it’s easier to say than it is to do. Even after forgiving someone, the hurt from the offense can still impede our progress or hold us back when we remember the painful details. Most of us, when we have been offended will rehash our hurts multiple times, for some reason we find a need to hold on to those memory rather than letting go and allowing the wounds to heal. Recall the story of the Bell Ringer. However, the lesson suggests the only way we can truly move past the pain and hurt of the offense is to forget.

I. A Survey on Forgetting

What are we talking about when we say to forget? The dictionary defines “forget” as “to fail to recall the hurt or to dismiss it from the mind; stop remembering; to lose the remembrance of; to treat with inattention or disregard; to disregard intentionally; to overlook; to cease remembering or noticing; to fail to become mindful at the proper time.”

All of the above definitions are mental. They are primarily exercises of the mind, cognitive reasoning of a desired result. But in a biblical context, forgetting is an exercise of the will. It is not simply mental, it is behavioral, an action more serious than to just not
remember. To forget has to do with my behaviour toward my offender after I forgive, and my willingness to get on with life as I invite my offender to do the same. I forget when I refuse to allow the offense to dictate my destiny. I forget when I willingly release the offender, no matter how intense or painful the memory. With the above definition in mind, notice how Chuck Swindoll links these three topics together to start a portrait of forgetting that every servant must learn.

- Disregard the Offense Ps. 119:165
- Harbor no Judgmental Spirit Matt. 7:1–5
- Refuse to Keep Score 1Cor. 13:4–5

1. In Ps 119:165, we learn that believers are able to disregard the transgressions of others when they have:

- Love God’s Word
- Have great peace
- Shall offend them
- Make them stumble

2. In Matt 7:1-5, Jesus take this opportunity to teach again the golden rule that we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Jesus warns us to harbor no judgmental spirit or look for faults in other people.

In v1, Jesus says “Judge not, that you be not judged

- What does the word “judge” mean in the context of this verse?

In v2, Jesus says, “the way you judge, is the way you will be judged, your standard of measure, is the standard by which you will be measured.”

- Why is this statement important for believers to understand?
In v3–4, Jesus illustrates the carelessness of a judgmental spirit and how easily it can lead us to criticize others even when we have far more serious shortcomings in our own lives.

- Why do you think Jesus framed the statement with “why do you look” and “how can you say?”

In v5, Jesus uses the word “hypocrite,” and then said “first remove the plank from your eye, then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

- What does this verse mean when confronting sin?

3. In 1Cor 13:4–5, we learn that when love is at work in the heart of the believer we will refuse to keep score. How is that kind of love demonstrated and how does it help us forget a past offense?

II. An In Depth look at Forgetting

In Phil 3:4–11, Paul shows us that a transformed mind is what moves our hearts to forget. And He reminds us that when Christ becomes our primary motive and goal great character change will inspire a servant’s heart that’s prepared to forgive and forget.

In v4–6, Paul reviews his own history as a Jew before he came to know Christ.
• What does Paul’s history reveal about his religious credentials?


In v7–9, Paul puts his spiritual life in perspective in light of knowing Christ.

• How did Paul view his life’s achievements once he came to know Christ?


In v10–11, Paul explains that his primary goal in life is to know Christ.

• What does knowing Christ as Paul describes in these verses provide?


III. The Other side of Forgetting

In Phil 3:12–14, Paul brings out the positive side of forgetting as he reveals the three critical characteristic, vulnerability, humility and determination that enables the servant to forget.

1. What does it mean to be vulnerability, in the context of Paul’s statement in v12, “Not that I have already obtained it?”


2. How does the statement in v13 “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind” demonstrate humility?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. How did Paul’s determination, in v14 make it possible for him to live a full and productive life as a servant?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What’s the practical response to a lesson about “forgetting” the past, moving on from the hurt and trusting God with our future? In a realistic way most of us find that forgiving is much easier than forgetting. But the process of moving on is not complete until we can put the past behind us and that means to forget it. So as we struggle with the truth of this lesson, three reminders will help us to understand that “Improving Your Serve” includes learning to forget.

- Forgetting reminds me that I, too, have flaws.
- Forgetting enables me to be understanding and encouraging, not petty and negative.
- Forgetting frees me to live for tomorrow rather than keeping me hung up on yesterday.