

FORGIVE

Forgiveness is not about feeling. Forgiveness is about God.

Forgiveness is driven by faith, not feelings.

SERIES BIG IDEA:

Trusting in God's measure of justice on all sin gives us the grace and freedom to forgive others.

God's love and justice transforms how we see and treat ourselves and others.

¹⁵ "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ¹⁶ Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. ¹⁷ Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. ¹⁸ Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Leviticus 19:15-18 (NIV)

- **We judge one another in the same way God has judged us. (v15)**
- **We openly, honestly, and directly rebuke others when they are guilty. Not doing this is to share in their guilt. (v16-17)**
- **We release grudges because of God's justice, and we love others as we love ourselves. (v18)**

God's community pursues justice without vengeance by pursuing justice with loving forgiveness.

There are, then, two ways to pursue justice—out of vengeance and out of love. You can do it to satisfy your anger and desire to see the wrongdoer suffer, but this serves to harden your heart and make you more capable of hurting people yourself in the future. In addition, it allows the perpetrator to continue to have some control over you. But you can also pursue justice—as the Leviticus verses hint—out of love. It's our job to help perpetrators see their wrongdoing out of love for them (Galatians 6:1), love for potential future victims, love for the human community, and love for God. The only way this is possible is if you forgive as you are seeking justice.

Keller, Timothy. *Forgive: Why Should I and How Can I?* (p. 91)

TEACHING BIG IDEA:

God's love and justice creates a new community of reconciliation marked by forgiveness.

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

God wants us to have a heart that is committed to forgive.

²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶ "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

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³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Matthew 18:23-35 (NIV)

- I am to forgive others to the extreme measure that God has forgiven me.
- Before I seek justice I must remember the mercy and love that God has shown to me.
- We compromise the gospel when we fail to forgive.

God's community is reconciled by forgiveness.



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TEACHING SUMMARY:

Culture gives us different reasons we should forgive others, and most of them are self-therapeutic.

Forgiveness is not about feeling, forgiveness is about God. Faith in God's love and justice is what transforms Christ-followers into a new community who pursues reconciliation by forgiving one another because God has reconciled them back to Him by forgiving their sins.

Christ-followers are marked by forgiveness. Each Christ-follower is radically forgiven a debt with God that he or she could never pay back to God. God expects Christ-followers to forgive others to the same extreme that He has forgiven them.

God wants us to be committed to forgiving others. How do we do this? We must remember God's mercy and love that was demonstrated to us through Jesus Christ before we seek justice for the wrongs committed against us. Otherwise, we compromise the gospel if we fail to forgive. This doesn't mean that we don't speak out when we are wronged. It means that we speak out with a heart that is committed to love and not vengeance.

TALK-IT-OVER:

How would you explain justice to someone? What role would God play in your explanation?

Do you believe that you have been forgiven by Christ? Do you forgive others in the same way?

What role can you play in Christ's community that is marked by forgiveness?

What is one next step you need to take today?

Who do you need to tell about what you've learned?

DAILY SCRIPTURE READING:

Day 1) Ephesians 4:31-32

Day 2) Psalm 65:2-4

Day 3) Colossians 2:6-15

Day 4) Psalm 85:1-3

Day 5) Colossians 3:12-13

Day 6) Psalm 32:1-5