

Month of Opportunity

Week 3

Opportunity to Forgive.

Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV2011)

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.”

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.

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.”

How many times do we forgive? That’s a different question from what the disciples asked. They asked how many times shall I forgive, or how many times am I supposed to forgive.

Usually, we go by the three strikes and your out rule. It just isn’t biblical is it.

But hang on forgiving is hard. Yep that’s why the bible talks so much about it. It gives us templates and formats for forgiveness to happen. Interestingly enough, much of what the bible says about forgiveness is about forgiving “within the family” and “within the church”.

V21 “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

So today we will look at the opportunities of forgiveness before us.

1. We are instructed to forgive.
Lords Prayer

Luke 11:4 (NIV2011)

⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ”

We ask God to forgive us, and we are expected to forgive others who wrong us. Note the wording I used there- **Expected.**

That is interesting isn't it – we see forgiveness as a choice but it is actually a point of obedience to God.

2 and 3. Two points here come from another passage.

Luke 17:1-5 (NIV2011)

¹ Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come.

² It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

³ So watch yourselves. “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.

⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

2. Accent the “I’m Sorry”

. “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.

Oh hang on, so we only forgive them if they say sorry. Now it gets tricky. Can I hold a grudge if they don't ask for forgiveness? What if they don't know they have done the wrong thing by you? Can we still hold a grudge? Now this passage takes some working through, the thing is – it is for each of us personally to work through.

I read an interesting statement :

Who does my forgiveness reach out to and who does it leave unforgiven?

What a great evaluative statement. Ask ourselves that question. Who am I willing to forgive and who will I leave

That takes us to the next point and infact the next portion of the passage.

3. Even repeat offenders – we MUST forgive.

Notice v4

4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

So anyone who says sorry has to be forgiven. Well that is what it says isn't it. Let's not read something else into it. Here is one of those bible principles that is right in our face – No choice, well there is choice but it would mean going against what God calls us to do if we don't forgive.

Are we Christians, do we follow Jesus? Then we are called to forgive and forgive a lot. Yet this forgiveness thing goes further and it is Jesus who takes us further.

4. The forgiveness model – Jesus

Luke 23:34 (NIV2011)

34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Look at this: Jesus is wrongly accused, Jesus is tried illegally and brutally, He is beaten, whipped, embarrassed, ridiculed, isolated, His friends left Him, denied Him actually, He is used as a political pawn, hey this list can go on.

Yet Jesus reaction. Father Forgive them, they don't get.

So this ups the stakes. As one writer wrote.

Forgiveness isn't a set of rules of how many and what for.

Forgiveness in Jesus eyes is a lifestyle.

It is a way of displaying love,

it is a way of maintaining relationship

it is a teaching tool

it is how we do obedience to God.

The other thing about how Jesus forgives. Jesus forgives without consequence.

Jesus not only forgives, but deals with the issues and His way of dealing with the big sin issue, is to die in our place.

But hang on, how does that play out as an opportunity for us.

Well, we have:

The opportunity to follow Jesus teaching and example.

We have the opportunity to forgive and forgive a lot

We have the opportunity to forgive without agenda.

That's it isn't it:

We have the opportunity to forgive.

We as a church see lack of forgiveness every week, we are human

We are human, yes but we have the templates to live.

This template says forgive.

There are things in everyone's life that are unresolved. And this is not easy, I'm not saying it is. Within churches there are unresolved hurts from the past, as well as on going unresolved issues. There are personality clashes, agenda clashes and people we just don't get on with. Forgiveness is a big call but a right one.

How?

Pray. Ask God to help you forgive.

Identify what is the real issue and what has broken the relationship.

Repent for having not forgiven

Do it. Go and say sorry.

A couple of words of warning:

Firstly, Some may think your crazy, some may think they have done nothing wrong and some may apologise and give you a hug.

It also may take time for you to work through how and when to approach the situation. Take time but not forever.

Secondly, I don't know what issues or forgiveness points this sermon has brought up in your thought processes. I don't know all about everyone's lives. All I know is forgiveness works, it is what God has asked us to do and it is right. Please consider your forgiveness processes.