

“FABULOUS FORGIVENESS”

PART 1: EXPLAINING FORGIVENESS (Col. 3:12-13)

INTRO: Funny — An elderly single lady . . . My first girlfriend . . . Getting even, taking revenge is a way of life for many — even believers.

➤ L. Smedes . . .

➤ What is your typical reaction to hurt? When we are hurt we have 4 options: nurse, rehearse, curse, or disperse it . . .

Hence this series on “Fabulous Forgiveness”

D. Seamands, respected Pastor and Counselor, author of “Healing Damaged Emotions”, concludes that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are: failure to understand, receive, and live out... and the failure to extend that to others (p. 29). So, let’s look at this important issue.

I. THE MYTHS ABOUT FORGIVENESS — Failing to understand the true nature of forgiveness prevents us from receiving and granting this important gift. A national survey entitled “Americans’ Views on Forgiveness” indicate very few Americans (including only a handful of evangelical Christians) have a biblical worldview on forgiveness. The survey analyzed responses to several myths concerning forgiveness.

A. MYTH # 1: *Forgiveness should be granted only if the offending person shows remorse* (40% evangelical Christians agree). Can you really forgive someone if they show no remorse for what they did? Must the one who hurt me repent for me to forgive them? NO!

B. MYTH #2: *Forgiveness requires that the offending party be released from the consequences of his or her actions* (77% of U. S. adults believe this is true). Does true forgiveness demand the offender be released from any consequences? NO! Forgiven people must sometimes sit in the hot seat. Forgiveness does not necessarily erase the consequences.

C. MYTH #3: *True forgiveness means that the forgiver must also forget what was done* (66% of U. S. adults agree). If you really forgive someone, you’ll be able to forget (in time) what they did to you? NO!

D. MYTH #4: *True forgiveness requires the forgiver to restore the relationship with the offending person.* (73% agree). Don’t confuse forgiveness with reconciliation and restoration. Forgiveness depends on me; reconciliation depends on US.

E. MYTH #5: There are some offenses that people do that can never be forgiven (28% of evangelical Christians agree). Are some offenses unforgivable? No, not for a believer. Even adultery and abuse are forgivable through God’s grace. If these are untrue, what is the true nature of biblical forgiveness?

II. THE MEANING OF FORGIVENESS

A. Forgiveness is NOT:

1. Forgetting — denying the reality of our pain and hurt; asking someone to forget a wrong is like asking me to slam dunk — ain’t gonna happen!
2. Letting offender off the hook — Forgiving doesn’t always erase the consequences of their offensive behavior. Then what is “Forgiveness?”

B. BIBLICAL CONCEPT — Words related to forgiveness occur 143 times in Bible (68 in OT and 75 in NT). Similar to hope, mercy, grace. The Biblical concept has the idea of releasing someone from an obligation (financial, emotional). Forgiveness was common theme in Christ’s teachings (Matt. 5:23-4; 6:12-15; 18:21-34; Mk. 11:25-6). He extended forgiveness to all kinds of sinners (thieves, prostitutes, etc.). As He was dying on the cross, He cried out to His Father (Lk. 23:34). Paul, too, 10+ times.

C. WORKING DEFINITION — FORGIVENESS is the *decision to set someone free from an obligation to you that is a result of a wrong they did against you*. Three key elements are involved in a forgiveness transaction:

1. *Recognition* that some has hurt you and wronged you in some way — an injury has occurred – abused, betrayed, cheated, . . .
2. Because of the wrong done to you, an *obligation* for repayment has occurred — a debt is now owed because of the harm done. Wrongs create debts.
3. A decision is made for *cancellation* of the debt owed and to release the offender from that obligation and to absorb the loss ourselves. This third element is where we struggle most. OT picture (Lev. 16:20-22).

ILLUS: Car wreck . . . R. G. Lee said . . .

III. THE METHOD OF FORGIVENESS — No concept is more critical to the Christian faith than forgiveness. The Gospel is essentially the message of God’s forgiveness. The whole point of the Incarnation was forgiveness (Lk. 1:77). It was the very thing Jesus died for. Let’s examine what God did through the person and work of Jesus Christ and our definition of forgiveness.

A. RECOGNITION of wrong — God has been offended. All are in the same boat of sin. All broken His law at some point. All spiritually dead. All guilty in need of forgiveness.

B. OBLIGATION of debt is owed to a holy God (Rom. 6:23). There is a debt to be paid.

C. CANCELLATION of debt — Paid in full by Jesus Christ (Col. 2:13-14; 1:13-14). God absorbed the debt Himself — talk about mercy, love, and grace.

CONC: It’s difficult to genuinely experience what you don’t understand. Even more difficult to impart what you do not possess.