

## Forgive One Another Without Being Asked

**Do not be easily offended, don't hold grudges; forgive without requiring an apology. Be very ready to forgive, knowing that all people fall far short of God's glorious standard.**

**Matt 6:14-15; Matt 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4; Luke 23:34; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13**

Forgiveness is the very heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. God has forgiven us in spite of the fact that we don't deserve it. To not readily forgive others who do not deserve our forgiveness, is to disregard God's grace and offend Him. Our forgiveness of others is one of the most critical things we Christians are to do.

Forgiveness is not holding the sins of others against them. It is pardoning them. It means we will not count their sin against them or punish them. Then, their forgiveness is between them and God.

Forgiveness is a primary way of thanking God for ourselves being forgiven. It is a measure of our gratitude. God expects thanksgiving for His forgiving of our sins. This appreciation is to be passed on to others through forgiveness.

To prepare for more in heaven, you want to forgive others even if they have not asked for or desire it. You want to not be easily offended, not hold grudges, and forgive without requiring an apology. It will help you to have a spirit very ready to forgive if you accept that all people fall far short of God's glorious standard for purity and right behavior.

Forgiving others sets you free to concentrate on obeying Scriptures and living for God. Then, you can deal with the problem the forgiveness is all about, and possibly help the one who hurt you or others. You should be so secure in knowing God will take care of you no matter what others do to you, that you can forgive anyone for anything.

Jesus sets the standard for forgiving others. When He was nailed to the cross, He prayed to God, *"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."* They were killing Him and causing Him much pain, but they really did not fully know what they were doing.

We want our spirits to change to forgive others out of the same understanding – that in light of everything eternal, they do not fully know what they are doing or the consequences of their actions before a holy God.

Since there will be nothing requiring forgiveness in heaven, now must be the time to maximize our ability to forgive. As forgiveness ultimately requires facing our own sinfulness, it makes us more aware of just how very much we do not deserve to go to heaven. Knowing vividly that we do not deserve to be in heaven when we get there will require that we strongly experience how forgiven we are right now. Thus, the amount you can forgive others will affect the level of appreciation for heaven you will take there. How far you can go into forgiving others is a measure of how thankful you are that God forgave you and granted you eternal life and heaven.

Our sense of unworthiness and appreciation of our own forgiveness will grow whenever we forgive someone for something horrible they have done. To be able to show them unmerited forgiveness will require that we intensely appreciate God's grace shown to us. Feeling so privileged to have received

forgiveness enables us to joyfully forgive others when it is very difficult to do so.

Most likely, there are many times we find ourselves privileged beyond what we deserve. Perhaps it is witnessing an amazing sunset in some beautiful setting. We did not make it happen by planning to be there. The sunset was freely given by God. We recognize this and the experience is magnificent pleasure.

That is the kind of experience you might want to make sure you have in heaven. If so, prepare to gain that greater joy of being in heaven by growing your gratitude now. Remember, in heaven no one will offend you and there will be nothing to forgive. In heaven there will be no way for your spirit to grow through the act of forgiving. To prepare your spirit for greater appreciation of being in heaven, you must let your gratitude grow now by amplifying forgiveness to more and more grievous sins against you and others.

For example, it is very hard to forgive terrorists for torturing and killing people. It is painful to forgive those who traffic girls into the sex trade. To do this extreme forgiveness, we have to realize that the offenders do not deserve our forgiveness just like we do not deserve God's forgiveness. And, so, we forgive out of a deeper appreciation for God's forgiveness of us.

Because sometimes forgiveness is truly difficult, we need one another's help to grow in forgiveness and release its power. We need to see one another forgiving others out of gratitude for having been forgiven themselves by God. We need to help one another know we are headed for heaven only because of God's undeserved love. We need to help one another appreciate heaven more. We need to help one another give forgiveness to those least deserving of it so that later in heaven we will have more appreciation for our salvation and greater joy forever.

It might be difficult to understand that there will be different degrees of appreciation of heaven when we are there. How can that be when in heaven everyone will be content?

This happens now. People enjoy things to different degrees and are content. A person may go to the zoo and appreciate only lions, tigers, and bears. That person will be happy and content, with no regrets at all. But, a friend may enjoy five more kinds of animals and be content. So, the question is, "Since both will be fulfilled, which person would you like to be when you go to the zoo?" If you chose the second, to be the person who really liked more animals at the zoo, then you probably want to enjoy more in heaven when you get there.

Everyone's cup of amazement that they are in heaven by the loving grace of God will be full. But, everyone will have different sizes of cups, the size that precisely fits their spirits. Upon arriving in heaven, the level of our wonder will coincide with the level of our ability to forgive now as stretched by our struggle to forgive ever more despicable and undeserving people.

And then there is God and our relationship with Him in heaven to consider. God will get joy from our level of appreciation of being in heaven in the same way a mother or father gets joy from how much appreciation their children have in being taken to the zoo. The more appreciation for being in heaven, the more God will experience joy. And the closer will be the relationship with God.

When we forgive someone a huge debt or a very hurtful action against us, don't we want that person to be thankful for our generous attitude? God is no different – He wants us to be thankful for His generosity. And, if we see someone we have forgiven being more gracious to others as a result, doesn't that make our forgiveness of them worthwhile? God is no different – He wants to see His forgiven Christians forgiving others.

Our desire for God to be glorified by our forgiving someone who does not deserve forgiveness should provide the motivation to overcome resistance to forgive. Then forgiveness can be done from the heart.

However, there are reasons for our resistance to forgive that must be overcome. Let's look at the most likely reasons Christians might resist forgiving someone so that we can overcome them.

(1) Most people think that forgiveness includes granting trust. It does not. A person forgiven should not be a person trusted until there is convincing history that he or she will not offend again in the same or similar way. The most forgiving person who ever lived was Jesus, and He did not grant trust, only forgiveness. The last two verses in John, Chapter Two make that clear.

(2) Some resist forgiving so that they can avoid involvement with the person or persons who offended them in order to not be mistreated again – to protect themselves. To forgive in the way that enhances our future life in heaven, we need to get over wanting such safety from being hurt that we shut other people out and rob them of the opportunity to change.

(3) We might hesitate to forgive another because we do not want to admit that we do the same thing. To deal with their hurtful behavior by forgiving will remind us that we need to stop some kind of behavior – and we don't want to.

(4) Or we might hesitate to forgive another because we do not want to make the other person uncomfortable and feel guilty. However, only rarely do we need to announce that we have forgiven someone. Usually, we can forgive within our spirits, not make it public, and then go on to help the person change. If the other person is not interested in changing, then to preserve what relationship there is, forgiveness should silently be given down deep in our spirits and behavioral expectations downgraded.

(5) Although there is no logic to this reason to not forgive, some connect forgiveness with agreement and acceptance of the sin. The forgiven person might misinterpret forgiveness for approval or willing concession. In that case, the forgiveness needs to be made with clarification that we do not agree with the behavior – and that it is not okay.

(6) A very few of us gain something by not forgiving so that we can keep on feeling like a victim. Seeing oneself as victimized by others can become a way to get attention. It should not work, but too often does.

And, (7), a few Christians resist forgiving to keep the other person feeling that something is owed them – to keep the other person indebted to them.

Of course, none of these reasons are legitimate for those of us who are eternally grateful for God's forgiveness. We want to make our forgiving others a way of thanking God for His great mercy.

But, keep in mind that forgiving others benefits us as well as those we forgive. It lightens our burden of resentment. It takes away the forbidden desire to judge. It can heal our hurt. It reduces stress that can cause mental and physical problems.

In summary, forgiveness has three elements. (1) Following in the grace of Jesus on the cross, forgiveness understands that people do not truly understand why they sin, even though they are still responsible for their sin and need forgiveness. (2) Forgiveness is a reflection of God's grace. Forgiveness lets God's grace pass through us as an act of undeserved love. (3) Forgiveness should be given out of thankfulness for God having forgiven us.

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There is more about forgiving others at our website [ChristiansTogether.org](http://ChristiansTogether.org). Just go down the list of the Togethers and click on "Forgive One Another".

**Prayer to Embrace this Together**

*I and those in my Christian Inner Circle need Your help to grow our spirits in forgiving. Help us to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit so that all of us give You more glory by appreciating the grace You have extended to us in Christ and respond by forgiving others freely.*

*Please help us all to become more like Jesus and be able to forgive everyone because they don't know what they are really doing in light of God and eternity. Like Jesus, empower us to not be so easily offended, making forgiveness less necessary.*

*May our lives worship You more because we forgive like You do – when it is not deserved. You forgave us out of Your grace and love, so help us to extend to others grace and forgive out of love, not just because we are supposed to.*

*Make us strong in Your power to defeat the devil by refusing to forgive out of distasteful duty, which would be lack of worship and not honor You. Remind us that Satan wants to rob You of glory, and we want to keep him from robbing You of glory by our graceful forgiving of others. So, please have the Holy Spirit keep at the front of our minds that we have been forgiven by the costly death of God's begotten Son and should not withhold forgiveness and be so ungrateful. Make us mindful that the devil needs to divide us to strip away our strength over him and, therefore, urges us to be unforgiving of one another. Let our forgiveness of those in our Christian Inner Circles be easy and spontaneous.*

*Help us to grow in appreciation for our own salvation so that when we get to heaven, we will regard being there as more wonderful and have a greater appreciation for the gift of eternal life through Jesus.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*