

Mean What You Say When You Pray

Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No.”—Matthew 5:37

R.T. Kendall: Have You Only Partially Forgiven?

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It may seem surprising to some that people who are not Christians can learn to forgive. I believe that there are degrees of forgiveness. A person who is not a Christian could demonstrate what may be called “limited forgiveness” and feel all the better for it. If a person is sufficiently motivated, he or she may achieve a great deal of inner satisfaction by overcoming bitterness. Mahatma Gandhi appealed to a sense of valor and heroism when he said, “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” On the other hand, President John F. Kennedy said, “Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names.” That is hardly total forgiveness!

The Bible urges us to forgive—totally.

I suppose that the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors”—or, as put another way, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”—has made liars out

of more people than any other line in human history. But don't blame Jesus for that. We should mean what we say if we choose to pray the Lord's Prayer. And Jesus did not say we had a choice; He said, "This, then, is how you should pray."

Jesus regarded this as the most important petition in His prayer. "Forgive us our debts" is obviously a plea for forgiveness from God. But then comes the following line (or possibly the big lie): "as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Just after the prayer is finished, Jesus goes on to say, "If you forgive men when they sin against you ... " Jesus intended the meaning of sin when He said the word debt. It means "what is owed to God," and because you owe Him pure obedience, falling short of that means you are indebted to Him.

Excerpted from *Total Forgiveness* (Charisma House, 2002).

Pray for Those Who Hurt You

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. –Matthew 5:44

Saving Face

So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. –Genesis 45:8

Must Prune to Bloom

A weeping, flowering cherry tree is one of the most beautiful of all of the ornamental trees. We bought my mother-in-law one for Mother's Day many years ago. She was so excited. Being a certified nurseryman, I planted the tree exactly the way it should be done. The next year it bloomed nicely—and even better the next year.

However, after about four or five years, my mother-in-law called me right after the tree had bloomed. She expressed concern because the tree barely bloomed at all that spring. In fact, she said it was pitiful. The next time we went for a visit, I took my pruning clippers and small pruning saw. While she watched, I got the ladder and went to work. Several times I heard her say, “O my,” and “O dear.”

Correct, effective pruning is different than just “shearing” the tree to look like a lollipop. There are two basic types of branches that need to be removed. The first is a branch that is growing the wrong direction. These branches rub the other branches and can cause disease. They also block out the sunlight that is needed for flower buds to form.

The other type of branch to prune is a “sucker” branch that shoots out beneath the graft. These branches are incredibly dangerous to the life of the tree. They will draw all of the strength and energy from the tree into themselves, and the tree will often die—but only above the graft, which is where the blooms grow.

Dealing With Guilt

And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. —Genesis 45:5

There Is No Fear in Love

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. —1 John 4:18

The Absence of Bitterness

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

The Ultimate Proof of Total Forgiveness

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. –2 Corinthians 5:19

Beware of Yesterday's Anointing

I have given them the glory that you gave me. –John 17:22

I was brought up in the Church of the Nazarene, a denomination that was born in revival. There was an unusual anointing of convicting power on that church in its early days. They had what its founder, Phineas Bresee, called “the glory.”

What was that? It was the anointing—an anointing that transcended their lack of education, money, refinement, and prestige. The presence of God was at times so powerful it seemed almost impossible for lost people to enter their services without getting converted. People who came to laugh and scoff ended up smitten and on their knees in tears before God. The services were frequently characterized by shouts of joy and people waving their handkerchiefs with inexpressible happiness.

In his last days old Dr. Bresee would preach from church to church one message: "Keep the glory down." Why? He knew that if they ever lost it they were finished.

If God had His way in our churches today, what would happen? I don't know. I know how He has worked in the past. The trouble is, our education, culture, and refinement stand in the way of the Spirit having His own way.

When the anointing lifts and the glory fades away, there are always those who sadly won't admit to the withdrawal of the Spirit. They continue trying to "work it up"—creating the shouting and manifestations that become pale imitations.

Once this happens, the glory becomes yesterday's anointing in two ways. First, God may not necessarily want His glory to be manifested in precisely the same way as it had been unveiled in a previous era. Yesterday's anointing was real enough, but it was for yesterday. Second, those who "work it up" are trying to keep yesterday's anointing alive, and the flesh becomes all too obvious. They are trying to relive what God was doing yesterday but may not have chosen to do today.

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