

The Torment of Unforgiveness

Unforgiveness is the biggest kink in the hose in American Christianity. It's why this nation is in such a mess right now. It's why our churches are dead and dying. It's why the lukewarm spirit of the age has destroyed our congregations. It's also the number one reason why people do not receive freedom and deliverance.

We sit in church with absolute unforgiveness in our hearts, glorying in the fact that we've been forgiven of all, yet we forgive so very little of those who have grieved us. People say, "Oh, but you don't know what they did," or, "You don't know what they said." I will never minimize what they did or said, but it pales in comparison to what we've done and what we've said to Jesus.

Ephesians 4:32 says God has forgiven us of all our sin for Jesus' sake. We deserve death, but through His forgiveness we have been given life. We deserve hell, but because of the baptism of God's love and forgiveness we've been radically set free from our rebellion and our grievances. Forgiveness is simply setting people free who don't deserve it. From a deliverance standpoint, what we most have to learn about forgiveness is that it's not about the person who wronged you being right—it's about you being right, in your spirit. In that respect, forgiveness isn't initially for the other person; it's a gift you give yourself.

How Often Lord?

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven," (Matt. 18:21-22).

Jesus had this unique way of taking the cookies and putting them on the bottom shelf so everyone could reach them. The

passage in Matthew 18 above was a very elementary teaching, yet even some of Jesus' disciples didn't quite grasp what He was saying. Here we see Simon Peter, the leader of the disciples during this time, not only asking "How often?" but also offering up his own answer. Peter had the spiritual gift of putting both feet in his mouth at the exact same time.

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Peter says, "How often should I forgive the people who have ticked me off? How often should I forgive the people who have abused me? How often should I forgive the people who have hurt me?" Then Peter tries to sound super spiritual by coming up with his own super-charitable answer: "Should I forgive him a whopping seven times? Should I go that far above and beyond the Mosaic Law? Seven times, Lord?" Seven is the number of perfection, and you can be sure Peter knew that. Peter must have been confident that his bold answer would please his Master.

Well, Jesus fixed that quick. He said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven," (v. 22). Please do not misunderstand what Jesus meant; simple math makes that 490 times, but He was not saying to keep a record of wrongs as if you have permission to bust them in the mouth on the 491st time. Jesus was using an analogy to say we should continue to forgive an innumerable number of times because unforgiveness is a dark spirit.

This is why some of you are riddled with bitterness. It's why some of you are under a curse of turmoil financially. When you put your head on the pillow at night, all you see is the aggressor, the abuser and the molester—the dad that walked out, the mom that ridiculed you, the fifth-grade teacher that embarrassed you or that pastor who scarred you. In every case they were wrong, and you just can't let it go. You say things

like, "If you only knew how they've ruined the last 20 years of my life." Yes, and with an attitude like that, under the torment of unforgiveness, they will ruin the next 20 years of your life as well!

For your own sake, you have to release them. You give the enemy a foothold when you are not willing to forgive people, when you refuse to forgive their wrongs against you though God has forgiven you of so much. You give the enemy a rightful place to bring in a spirit of unforgiveness. As a result, you walk around bottled up in rebellion and bitterness and can't figure out why you always snap at your spouse or get frustrated with your kids. Everybody's always on your nerves. You never have patience. You struggle with road rage. You can't even pray, and you wonder, "When will I get my breakthrough?" The answer is simple: when you forgive the people that hurt you and just let it go. {eo}



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