

How to Forgive

“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? Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”

Matthew 18:22 (NIV)

In the teaching of the rabbis of our Lord’s time, you were to forgive someone an offence up to three times. That was the limit.

So, when Peter suggests 7 times, he was being generous—or so he thought.

It’s a sad thing when people keep score on how many times they’ve forgiven someone an offence.

Biblical forgiveness includes forgetting the offence has occurred.

Jesus makes this clear by using hyperbole in saying Peter was to forgive 70 times—or again and again.

Biblical forgiveness isn’t a matter of keeping score. It isn’t a matter of mathematics. It’s a matter of the heart desiring reconciliation.

Always—when we’ve been offended—we should have as our great objective the return of friendship and fellowship with the one who has offended us.

Too often the offended party

wants the offender to grovel, and to show great humility and remorse.

Certainly, if the offending person is truly repentant, he/she will be humbled. That goes without saying. A broken and contrite heart is appropriate when discovering we have offended someone.

But the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) must be ever before us when it comes to how we behave when someone is coming to confess their sin against us. We must run to meet them half way.

We need to make it easy for them to confess.

Never forget Christian, how gracious the Father was to you when you sought His forgiveness as a repentant sinner.

The Father rejoiced at your repentance. He wanted to celebrate your coming to where you belonged in the first place. The Father quickly wiped away your tears and replaced them by giving you a heart full of confidence that your prayer for forgiveness had been heard.

Such is the way of our loving heavenly Father. As His children we need to act in a similar manner.

Is there someone that needs your words of comfort and encouragement today?

Have they come confessing the offence and you hardly heard them? Have you have given them an icy reception?

Was there was no enthusiasm in your voice as you responded to their confession?

Pick up the phone and call them today. Make a visit to them as soon as possible to reach out in love and forgiveness.

Write them a letter that is full of gracious comments.

Behave like your Father in heaven and you shall be blessed for it. That person who has hurt you is waiting and so is the Saviour.

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