

The Gracious Life, Part 7 | be forgiving

I. Forgiveness is required to live a gracious life.

- Ephesians 1:7; Luke 7:42-43
- Forgiveness is always a blessing of grace!
- To not forgive is to take God's job and to relationally condemn them to an eternal separation.
- This doesn't mean there aren't legitimate consequences for sin. Grace is not an absence of consequences. Titus 2:11-12 (Luke 23:16)
- Sometimes the most gracious thing you can do for someone when they have sinned is to give them appropriate consequences that are designed to teach them to deny ungodliness and live godly.
- But the bigger point being made is that the one relational consequence we frequently like to give people who have sinned against us is the one consequence we are categorically *not allowed* to give them. We are not allowed to resent them, to be bitter against them, to not love them with the love of God, to be unkind to them, be sinfully angry against them, and the like.

II. Forgiveness is the only gracious act we cannot do all the time.

- Romans 13:8 teaches that we owe everyone love. If someone sins against you, there's no way for them to make up that love. Therefore, if they are going to respond to their sin correctly, they need to acknowledge their debt by confessing their sin. They also need to ask for forgiveness. Confession, Apology, and Repentance are the three-fold requirements for making our sin right with another.
- But what if they never ask? What if they don't want to be forgiven?
 - God doesn't forgive people who don't ask for forgiveness.
 - IN regard to Luke 23:34 GotQuestions.org says, "It is important to note that Jesus' prayer, 'Father, forgive them,' does not mean that everyone was forgiven, unilaterally, without repentance and faith. It does mean that Jesus was willing to forgive them—forgiveness was, in fact, the reason He was on the cross. The words 'Father, forgive them' show the merciful heart of God."
 - But not being able to forgive them doesn't mean we should have a Spirit of Forgiveness. (Mark 11:25-26)
 - **A Spirit of Forgiveness is willing to forgive at any moment.**
 - **A Spirit of Forgiveness doesn't require anything beyond a simple request for forgiveness.**
 - **A Spirit of Forgiveness will continue to be gracious to the person who has sinned but who has not yet asked for forgiveness.**
 - Some people may ask, "How is that any different than actually forgiving a person?" And, to be honest, it's not too different. The key thing that's missing is the very important *verbal transaction*. For those who have sinned, the Bible is expressively clear that their responsibility is to see their sin the way God sees it, confess that sin, ask for forgiveness, and repent. And it's that transactional moment where forgiveness is sought and given that makes all the difference. It's not mystical or contractual, but the verbal request and granting of the request is a necessary step in the forgiveness process.
- Being a forgiving person is required to be gracious, however, no, you can't just hand out forgiveness to people who don't want to be forgiven. Not even Jesus did that. But—on the other hand—you must be ready and willing to give that forgiveness the moment it's sought.

III. God gets to set the expectations for our forgiveness.

- The first word translated “pardon” is a word that the vast majority of the time is translated “send away” or “divorce. Matthew 5:32; Luke 6:37; Matthew 18:27; Luke 13:12
- **Forgiveness is a permanent removal.** Matthew 26:27-28; Hebrews 10:18
- **Forgiveness is assumed.** Luke 11:4
- **Forgiveness is a prerequisite to forgiveness.** Luke 11:4
- **Forgiveness is conditional.** Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3-4 The individual who has sinned needs to ask for it.
- **Forgiveness is unconditional.** Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3-4 We must not withhold it for any other reason when it’s requested.
- **Forgiveness produces forgiveness.** Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 17:3-4 If we have been genuinely, spiritually forgiven by God, it should be the most natural thing in the world to forgive others.
- **Forgiveness is inherited.** II Corinthians 2:7-10 Paul tells us in II Corinthians 2:5 that the man’s sin was not directly against Paul but was against God and the rest of the Corinthian church. This is why Paul can say that he would have no problem forgiving what had been forgiven by the people against whom the man actually sinned. Don’t justify holding a grudge against someone or being bitter because someone sinned against a loved one. That would be a sin whether they apologized or not. Instead—and especially—when they have asked for forgiveness from your loved one, be sure not to hold that sin against them yourself.
- **Forgiveness is a mark of maturity.** Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-13; I Peter 3:8-9

IV. You cannot forgive yourself.

- **Forgiveness is only necessary when you owe someone a debt.**
- **Your sin always puts you in debt to God.**
- **Your sin often puts you in debt to others.**
- **Your sin doesn’t put you in debt to yourself.**
- **Therefore, there’s no way for you to forgive yourself.**
- Even if your sin did put you in debt to yourself, and even if it were necessary to forgive yourself of that debt.
- **Forgiving yourself would be very easy had you already been forgiven by God.** In addition,
- **Forgiving yourself would be even easier had you already been forgiven by others.**
- **Therefore, a struggle to forgive yourself would be to elevate your own forgiveness above that of the people against whom you sinned and the God against whom you sinned.**
- **But that kind of self-focused, pride is not the mindset of someone who is truly forgiven. It’s the mindset of someone who isn’t.** If you have been truly forgiven by God, then the conviction, shame, and sorrow should melt away and be replaced with joy, freedom, and thanksgiving. For people who think they need to forgive themselves, there are two main possibilities:
 - **You don’t truly understand Who God is and beauty of His forgiveness.**
 - **You haven’t been truly forgiven by God which is why you continue to experience shame, guilt, and sorrow over your sin.**