

## Eight Is Enough-# 5-Forgiveness

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Key Verse- Proverbs 19.11 – “*Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*”

- Definition of forgiveness-
  - The act of setting someone free from obligation to you as a result of wrong done against you. The word actually means "to dismiss or send away. “

### Question

- Studies seem to indicate that teenagers hold grudges and have a hard time forgiving others, which can lead to issues we have with teen depression.
- Why do you think teens have a hard time forgiving?

### **WHAT exactly IS “forgiveness?”**

- *First, what forgiveness is NOT*
  - It is not forgetting
    - *Our minds and hearts have a very difficult time forgetting things that have hurt us deeply. We may not be able to forget but we can learn to release*
    - *COL. 3:13 says, Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*
    - *The Greek tense for forgive is continual, “keep on forgiving”*
  - It is not reconciliation
    - Reconciliation takes two people, but an injured party can forgive an offender without reconciliation.
    - We can forgive someone even if they don’t ask or even want to be forgiven.
  - It is not condoning or dismissing
    - if something doesn’t matter, then forgiveness isn’t needed in the first place.
    - No forgiveness involves taking the offense seriously, not passing it off as inconsequential or insignificant
    - There is a great deal of grace in the act of forgiving someone. Forgiveness is built around the root word, “give” which should tell us that it is something that is undeserved — like a gift.
  - It is not easy
    - It can be extremely difficult to forgive. Perhaps this is one side effect of our sinful state. Forgiving someone seems to go against our grain.
    - *Can you think of other reasons why it’s not easy?*

### **WHY would God ask us to do something that is so unnatural...so difficult?**

- One reason is because God is so forgiving. It’s a natural part of His character and since He lives in us He wants us to show His natural character to the world.

- *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”  
Matt. 5:43-45*

**Another reason is He knows learning to forgive is good for us.**

Having an unforgiving spirit can hurt us psychologically

- Proverbs 23:7 says, *“As a man thinks within himself, so he is.”* In other words if you want to become a resentful person....refuse to forgive...fill your mind with resentful thoughts and plans.
- Resentment literally means “to feel again” (living it over and over again)
- Job 5:2 says, *“To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.”* (The Living Bible)

Having an unforgiving spirit can hurt us physically

- UN-forgiveness has been linked to cardiovascular disease, hypertension, high blood pressure, and even cancer. *“Researchers have gathered a wealth of data lately, suggesting that chronic anger associated with lack of forgiveness is so damaging to the body that it ranks with...or even exceeds...cigarette smoking, obesity, and a high-fat diet as a powerful risk factor for early death.”*
- A study at the University of North Carolina examined male medical school graduates over a period of 25 years. The results showed that these physicians with hidden hostilities died at a rate that was six times greater than those who had more forgiving attitudes.
- *“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”* Prov. 17:22

Learning to forgive also helps our relationships with God and man

- When we fail to forgive...we sin....and when we sin we erect a barrier between ourselves and God through which His love and mercy cannot flow.
- We tend to think that being forgiven by God and forgiving others are two separate things, but they aren't. Why do you think that is?

Learning to forgive also Benefits the forgiven person

Lewis Smeades writes, *“When you forgive someone, you slice away the wrong from the person who [harmed you.] You disengage that person from his hurtful act. You re-create him.”*

And forgiveness DOES have the power to re-create

***What event did Jesus have with Peter where he was re-created due to forgiveness? What were the results of this forgiveness***

**How Can we forgive?**

*Forgiveness brings Peace in relationships. So How do we have Peace?*

Peace starts with “P”

The “P” stands for pray

*“You have heard it said that you are to hate your enemies, but I say to you, love your enemies. **PRAY** for those who despitefully use you.”*

First step in the forgiveness process is to **pray** for the person who has wronged you.

Praying helps you deal with your hard feelings and hurt.

Asking God to diminish these feelings over time is necessary

The "E" stands for empathy

To forgive someone we need to empathize with them-in other words, we need to see our enemy from a completely different viewpoint. We must turn from seeing them from our painful perspective to seeing them as God sees them.

*They have infinite value to Him, they bear his image*

Ezekiel 33:11 says, *"God takes no pleasure in the demise of evil people."*

So to forgive, we need to love sinners as God does even though we hate what they did to us. Martin Luther said, *"To love one's enemy does not mean to love the mire in which the pearl lies, but to love the pearl that lies in the mire."*

The "A" stands for act

To forgive we need to sidestep our feelings of revenge and act in forgiving ways.

This principle of action is what Jesus was teaching in Luke 6 when He commanded us to *"Do GOOD to those"* who hate us and to *"BLESS those who curse us,"* And then....remember in Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus said that when we are hurt we are to ACT...GO to the person who hurt us.

Forgiveness involves ACTION!

The "C" stands for confess

Part of forgiveness is owning up to our side of the problem. More often than not we share part of the blame for pushing the person into being our enemy.

Sometimes it's our own jealousy...our own stubbornness...our own ambition...or even our own bad attitude that has contributed to the rift that is between us and others. And few things accelerate the peace process more than humbly admitting our own wrongdoing and asking for forgiveness. ***"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* James 5:16**

The "E" stands for example

This should remind us that whenever we are not sure how to love an enemy.... whenever we hesitate because we're perplexed over how to proceed....whenever we wonder if we've gone far enough in our effort to reconcile, we should look at the example of Jesus and model ourselves after Him.

Some of you might say, *"Keith, you just don't know the terrible things that person DID to me."* And you are right, I don't-but I do know what WE did to our Lord, and yet He forgave. I know how much we were forgiven...and remembering that ought to empower us to forgive as well. We'll never be asked to forgive someone more than God has already forgiven us.