

Love’s “Path of Prevention”: How can living/doing love help with forgiveness? “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7–ESV)

70 X 7!?! Does this illustrate what Jesus meant: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20–NIV)? Thank God for declaring us righteous, by faith, in Christ (see Romans 4 and 5).

How forgiveness is needed to be able to fulfill these body-life commands:

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (Romans 12:16-19–ESV)

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil . . . And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

(Ephesians 4:26, 27, 30-5:2–ESV)

A Discipleship Tool of Christ Community

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EXTRAVAGANT, FREELY GIVEN FORGIVENESS

Giving the Forgiveness We’ve Received
—from Matthew 18:21-35

As if forgiveness were not hard enough . . . In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus turns Peter’s commendable question into a—humanly speaking—ridiculous requirement; thanks for asking Pete! “Forgive seven times? How about innumerable times, given freely, genuinely, and fully?”

Common Rabbinic teaching was that we should forgive twice, or maybe three times, but, beyond that, forget it. That is asking too much. Simon suggesting seven was over the top. *Right?*

Jesus’ answer and story remind us that we have been forgiven more than we will ever need to forgive anyone else. “I see your seven, and multiply it to 490—that is—unlimited, sacrificial relational debt relief.”

Resist passing this passage off to the reluctant forgivers you know (quick, grab a mirror!). This text tolls for us. Mercifully, let’s keep in mind that we are following The Great Forgiver’s footsteps. He not only commands us to forgive, He first forgives us, and comes alongside us, by His Spirit, to make this otherwise impossible duty do-able.

Matthew 18:21 “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?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”
(Matthew 18:21-35–NIV)

Releasing Relational Debts, from the Heart

The Context: Restoring a Wayward Brother (18:1-20)

“But who’s counting?” Apparently We Are!

Peter: Seven times?

Rabbinic Tradition: 2 or 3, yes. Four? No. (Yoma 5:13)

Merciful Heritage: “But the Lord said “. . . anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” . . . Lamech said . . . “I have killed a man for wounding me . . . If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.”
(Genesis 4:15, 23, 24–NIV)

If you are keeping count, are you forgiving? (“no record of wrong”—1 Corinthians 13)

“Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” (Proverbs 19:11)

Jesus: Not Just Seven. Innumerable!

No need for the math! $70 \times 7 = \text{any, all, every}$

His Kingdom = One of Generous Grace, Holy Expectations

Mercy Received is to become Mercy Given (Ephesians 4:30-5:2)

Who owes you more than you owe God?

A Daily, Prayerful Reminder from Jesus: “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors . . .” For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15–ESV)

For Further Growth, or Group Study

Forgetting is not forgiving, nor a fun, fuzzy feeling. If we could forget why would we need to forgive? It is because we cannot forget that we choose to forgive—freely, fully. If by “forgetting” we mean we purposefully putting it out of our mind, not dwelling on in an ugly way, then by all means, forgive and “forget.”

What was Jesus feeling as He died on the cross, forgiving us? Is there a more God-like or difficult job than we are called on to do than forgiving? How true it is: To err is human, to forgive divine (see Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 12:1-7). It is hard, painful, nasty, necessary work. We give it, even when it is not asked for, deserved, or felt.