

## The Forgiving & Unforgiving Servant

In **Matthew 18:21-22** Jesus teaches Peter and the other disciples about genuine forgiveness in response to Peter's question, How many times do I need to forgive? Seven times? Jesus tells him, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times." I suspect that Peter asked Jesus this because he had forgiven someone many times, yet the person was not changing his behavior, and Peter was tired and hoping there was a forgiveness quota.

Jesus goes on to tell this story in **Matthew 18:23-35** NIV – (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 talents 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) "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 denarii. 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 you 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 greatly distressed 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 turned 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 from your heart."

What does it mean to forgive? To forgive is to dismiss. It is a legal term, a court room term and juridical term that carries the idea of going into a court room guilty, but leaving with the charge dismissed. Therefore, it is what God requires of His children; genuinely letting go of or dismissing the hurt that has been placed upon you. This demonstrates forgiveness. There are 8 principles that we must keep in mind when it comes to forgiveness.

- 1) Forgiveness requires that we take account.
- 2) If we look to the offender for renewal, restitution or compensation we will only be more wounded.
- 3) Anger is a normal reaction to injustice, but must be released before freedom will come.
- 4) The integrity and sincerity of the indebted is not critical for true forgiveness to be administered.
- 5) Genuine forgiveness requires that we find compassion.
- 6) Forgiveness emotionally releases the one offering forgiveness, but may have no impact on the one whose debt is clear.
- 7) Forgiveness should not be confused with reconciliation.

My brothers and sisters, I know and God knows that it is not always easy to forgive. You may not be the one who did someone else wrong. Perhaps you were the one who was treated wrong. But we must not allow our pride to stand in the way of us having freedom. When we forgive, the final outcome will be the presence of true compassion and forgiveness of those who have hurt us. Forgiveness is not something we have to work at, but rather it is a natural by-product of genuine renewal and resultant compassion. If we can't forgive, it's merely evidence that there are still areas of lie-based thinking from which we need to find freedom.

Remember. God forgave and forgives us! He requires for us to do the same genuinely! If we don't learn how to be forgiving now, **Matthew 18:35** explains what will take place while we are here on earth or possibly when we leave this earth.

### SCRIPTURE READING

COLOSSIANS 2:13-14

### THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Forgiveness gives up the right to hurt back.

