

DEVELOPING A FORGIVING SPIRIT

(PART 2 of 2)

March 9, 2020

COLOSSIANS 3:12-13 NKJV - (12) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; **(13)** bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

This week, we continue to look at more foundational truths that will help us to respond to an offense with a forgiving heart.

Recognize the difference between forgiveness and pardon: Forgiveness and pardon are separate issues. Forgiveness is a personal decision to release an offender from your condemnation. Pardon is a release from the legal penalties of an offense. You can forgive an offender and no longer hate him or wish him harm, but you cannot pardon him unless you have the authority to do so. For example, if a man killed someone in your family, you could forgive him and want to help him come to repentance, but you could not pardon him. He would still be guilty before God and before the law and would be held responsible for his actions. In a similar fashion, unless you are in a place of authority, it is not your responsibility to dole out consequences for wrong actions. You can trust God to be just in every situation. God works through authority structures (family, church, employment, and government), life circumstances, and final judgment at the end of time to bring justice to offenders. **(Matthew 18:6-7.)**

Voluntarily invest in the life of your offender: In appropriate instances, an important aspect of forgiveness can be the ability to invest in the life of your offender. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" **(Matthew 6:21)**. When you willingly give to an offender, God can supernaturally give you sincere love toward him. Ask God how He wants you to demonstrate His love to your offender. You should be able to invest in his life through prayer, words of affirmation, acts of service, or material gifts. Whether the offense was intentional or not, forgiveness enables you to have a greater concern for a person *after* he offends you than you had *before* he offended you. It opens your heart to cooperating with God's work in his life, and your sincere love for him allows you to minister to him and help him mature.

Understand that suffering is part of the Christian life: Scripture states, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" **(Philippians 1:29)**. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" **(II Timothy 3:12)**. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" **(II Timothy 2:12)**. As a follower of Christ, you can rejoice in suffering because of the good work God intends to accomplish through it. When offenses usher you into the classroom of trials and tribulations, you have an opportunity to grow in maturity and be filled with a greater understanding of God's love.

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 103:10-14

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much.

"A JOURNEY OF THE HEART"