

Benefits of Forgiving Others 2017-02-19

Hebrews 12:14-15

Having had a cold for the past 2 weeks, I've come to realize unforgiveness is like having constant cold.

- Its negative affects permeate every area of our lives.
 - So for our good, the Lord commands us & then enables us to forgive

Review: It's easier to forgive others if you consider the forgiveness that God has freely given you and trust in His sovereignty. Lk 6:35, 7:47; Col 3:12-13; Eph 4:31-32

Fruit of biblical forgiveness:

- We choose not to hurt reputation of offender.
- We treat offender with kindness.
- We extend mercy to offender.
- Our forgiveness of those who have hurt us is permanent.

We are called to forgive, but that does not mean reconciliation is automatic. Mt 18:15-17, Rom 12:17-19

- Reconciliation can only happen when offender repents.
 - May need to communicate you were hurt.
 - Even if offender does not repent, offended can still benefit from forgiving:
1. Forgiving others can bring personal physical & emotional health: Prov 14:30, 17:22
 - Empirical research confirms that forgiving people are happier, healthier, more peaceful, better able to empathize with others, more spiritual/religious.
 - Frees forgiver of anger, bitterness & maybe physical issues
 - Person primarily hurt by unforgiveness is the unforgiver.
 - Bitterness keeps you emotionally stuck in past.
 2. Positive impact on world. Heb 12:14-15, Mk 11:25, Pro 24:17, 1 Pet 3:7
 - Our prayers are more effective....Mark 11:24-25, 1 Pet 3:7
 - Appears judgment comes sooner....Prov 24:17-18
 - Our job is to forgive, God's job is to see that justice is done.
 - Positive: goal is repentance & reconciliation. Heb 12:11
 3. Glorifies God. Mt 18:21, 6:12-14, Eph 4:26-27, 31-32
 - Tangibly displays Gospel....earthly picture of grace.
 - Usually no earthly or rational reason to forgive; mostly undeserved.
 - What a picture of God's grace!
 - Obeying LORD: God commands us to forgive all who have hurt us.
 - Reduces provision for future sin.
 - Like constant coldyour system always down so easier to be mean & nasty.....sin.
 - Fellowship with God more open & joyful.
 - Unforgiveness comes between the fellowship of us and God.
 - He hasn't drawn away – you have...feel guilty.
 4. Lord commands us to make forgiveness part of who we are....a lifestyle!
 - Forgiveness is an act of will, not an emotion, that must practice all the time.

- Forgiving little things makes it easier to forgive big ones.

Always hope that others will repent & ask for our forgiveness.

- But God doesn't make that a condition of our forgiving them.
- Regardless of what offender does, you can reap wonderful, eternal blessings by obeying scripture & being Christ-like as you forgive all who offend/hurt you.

Heb 12:14-15

14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

CORIE TEN BOOM story

Corrie Ten Boom's family hid Jews above their family watchmaker's shop until she and her sister Betsie were arrested by the Nazis and put in Ravensbruck concentration camp. There Betsie died.

After the war Corrie was speaking in a church in Munich, Germany. Then, as she shook hands with people she found herself confronted by a man she recognized as having been a guard in the camp. She heard him say "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk. I was a guard there. But since that time I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Will you forgive me?"

Corrie says that she could not. Betsie had died in that place. Could he erase her terrible death simply for the asking? Corrie says that it could not have been many seconds that he stood there with his hand held out. To her it seemed like hours as she wrestled with the most difficult decision she ever had to make. She stood there with coldness clutching her heart. But she knew that forgiveness was not an emotion, it is an act of the will to hand on the forgiveness she knew.

"Jesus help me," she prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. You supply the feeling." So stiffly, mechanically, she thrust her hand into the one outstretched to her and offered the forgiveness God had given her. As she did, an incredible thing took place. She says that a current started in her shoulder, raced down her arm, sprang into their joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood her whole being, bringing tears to her eyes.

"I forgive you brother!" she cried "With all my heart!"

For a long moment they grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. Corrie had never known God's love so intensely as she did then. She was able to forgive as she had been forgiven.