

Nobody walks with Christ, if they are unwilling to forgive like Christ.

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died:¹⁷ 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen 50-NIV)

My real end game for the series 70 x 7, is helping each of you learn how to **forgive others when you are injured.**

Now, maybe your relationships are sublime. Perfect. If you carry no baggage from being hurt by others, then perhaps you should take a nap while I am speaking.

But, if like me you struggle to let go of a painful past and keep making the same mistakes as you are injured by others this sermon is a veritable gold mine of biblical truth and practical insights about how to be set free.

If you don't learn how to forgive those who hurt you, your life is going to be miserable. You must learn this skill.

Forgiveness is not an elective in the Christian life, it is a core class in your major. Nobody walks with Christ, if they are unwilling to forgive like Christ.

If you dig into the insights and biblical instructions from this sermon series-70 x7, you will reap the benefits that we learn in the book of Joel, when God declares, you can heal from your past,

"so I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten." (Joel 2:25-NKJV).

When you fall short of using forgiveness appropriately you have all kinds of years and maybe decades eaten by locust.

Eaten up by resentment. Eaten up by anger. Eaten up by bitterness.

Come on, that is not the way to live. And who wouldn't want to be free from that?

Now, Joseph is an amazing representative for the Almighty.

He stands out like few other servants of God. Why was Joseph so great? Joseph seems to get more attention from Moses, the author of Genesis, than anyone else in this opening book-including Abraham. He was more than ordinary but not supernatural.

He had no halo, but he had a gracious and forgiving heart. He never walked on water. No miracles are attributed to his life. He did interpret some dreams but never gave any amazing prophecies. Why was Joseph so great?

Whereas Job endured at the hands of the Adversary, Joseph endured at the hand's others. The reason Joseph is so great is found in his ability to endure harsh treatment without becoming bitter. In the end, Joseph offered forgiveness to those who hurt him deeply.

Look with me at our text and you can see 3 qualities of the forgiveness that flowed from the forgiving heart of Joseph.

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers included emotional healing.

...When their message came to him, Joseph wept. (Gen 50)

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers included providential healing.

²⁰ *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, (Gen 50)*

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers included restorative healing.

²¹ *So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." (Gen 50)*

A Spanish father decides to reconcile with his son who had run away to Madrid. Now remorseful, the father takes out this ad in the El Liberal newspaper: Paco **meet me at Hotel Montana, noon Tuesday all is forgiven Papa.**

Paco is a common name in Spain and when the father goes to the town square, he finds 800 young men named Paco waiting for their fathers.

For a few minutes let's meet 11 grim faces that have been bowing before the most powerful person in the world next to Pharaoh. They are staring anxiously at the floor. All their attention is focused on the Egyptian man that is sitting on the throne in front of them.

They are a huddled mass of human fear, these 11 are bowing before one of the greatest surprises in all the bible.

And the one on the throne has the authority to execute them. To imprison them. To rough them up.

He is dressed in royal garb which is fitting for the position that he has. He is the prime minister of Egypt. He looks down on these Jewish herdsman. They stoop before him.

This Egyptian leader has had a long history with these men. It is a history of pain, suffering, and betrayal. Memories from 22 years earlier are all vividly etched into his mind. Return with me to that fateful day in Dothan.

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹ "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. ²⁰ "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." (Gen 37-NIV)

They had wronged this prime minister in the past, they had done great evil to him from a human perspective and now the tables are turned, and he has the power, authority to enact severe retribution against him.

They are in fact, the brothers of Joseph who have betrayed him. And the prime minister of Egypt is none other than Joseph. And now they grovel at the feet of Joseph because they are accused of stealing one of Joseph's household culinary cups.

¹⁴ Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? (Gen 44-NIV)

This is not only round two, but a déjà vu. You see this is the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams that he had when he was 17. Now, probably 39 years of age, Joseph is recalling those nocturnal night memories as they come flooding back. Let's go back 22 years.

⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." (Gen 37-NIV)

In his book, *Great Church Fights*, Leslie B. Flynn tells of two unmarried sisters who lived together, but because of an unresolved disagreement over an insignificant issue, they stopped speaking to each other. One of the inescapable results of refusing to forgive.

Since they were either unable or unwilling to move out of their small house, they continued to use the same rooms, eat at the same table, use the same appliances, and sleep in the same room...all separately...without one word. A chalk line divided the sleeping area into two halves, separating doorways as well as the fireplace. Each would come and go, cook and eat, sew and read without ever stepping over into her sister's territory.

Through the black of the night, each could hear the deep breathing of the other, but because both were unwilling to take the first step toward forgiving and forgetting the silly offense, they coexisted for years in grinding silence.

When we don't forgive, we are cast into a chamber of horrors that we cannot get free from. Then we are introduced to attitudes and actions that leave us judgmental, unteachable and bitter. Now, let me give you some practical suggestions for how to forgive.

Four Promises of Forgiveness

1. Avoid rehearsing in your mind the events associated with the offense.

When it comes to forgiveness there are some bases that all of us have to touch. Even though no two situations of forgiveness are ever the same, and each of us puts our own spin on the transaction of forgiveness, forgiveness follows the same pattern.

First, forgiveness allows us to see how human the other person really is. Our feet of clay are never more real than when we injure others. Have you ever noticed how, when you are injured or offended, how easy it is to shrink that person to the sum of the offense?

¹⁶no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. (Philemon 16-NIV)

They become just a cheat or a liar. Before your very eyes, like the wicked witch of the east in the *Wizard of Oz*, "they are melting, they are melting, they are melting."

No, he is no longer a broken creature made in the image of God, a confusing mixture of good and evil. He is reduced to a total sinner who did us wrong.

⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me." (Gen 16:5-NIV)

As we apply God's healing balm of forgiveness, the lenses of perception that were smudged by bitterness and resentment brings the person back into the focus of faulty humanity. Rehearsing the event over and over, causes them to get smaller and smaller in your mind.

Second, let go of the need to get even. The enjoyment you get from watching the offender turn and burn with hellish leisure on the rotisserie of shame and guilt is not going get any points with God.

Third, start immediately by blessing the person you forgive. We will only feel differently about the person if we see him differently. Ronald Reagan's attitude after the 1982 attempt on his life made an impression on his daughter, Patti Davis:

"The following day my father said he knew his physical healing was directly dependent on his ability to forgive John Hinckley. By showing me that forgiveness is the key to everything, including physical health and healing, he gave me an example of Christ-like thinking."

¹¹ Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it. (Gen 33:11-NIV)

2. Refuse to bring the offense up and use it against the person at a later date.

At the heart of forgiveness is the commitment to not only forgive, but to forget. We've all heard or even lived the motto, "OK, I'll forgive, but I'll not forget." This happens so often that it is second nature. And that is the problem, it is a part of the old nature. We need to get a new nature. Paul reminds us of this truth when he said, *"Old things pass away, all things become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17).

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor 5:17-NIV)

If you fail to commit to forgetting, then you truly haven't forgiven.

Forgiving someone doesn't necessarily mean forgetting the event because our brains are wired to remember, especially when an experience is emotionally charged, and holding onto the memory can sometimes be a protective mechanism to prevent future harm; essentially, while you can choose to forgive someone for their actions, you may still recall the memory of what happened without letting it control your emotions or actions towards them.

Key points about why it's hard to "forget" when forgiving someone:

- **Memory function:**

Our minds naturally store vivid memories of significant events, particularly those with strong emotional impact, making it difficult to completely erase them even when we forgive the person involved.

- **Fear of being hurt again:**

Remembering the past can act as a warning signal, helping us to be cautious in future interactions with the person we forgave.

- **Unresolved emotions:**

If the pain from the past is not fully processed, even when you forgive, the memory can still trigger negative emotions.

- **Bitterness and resentment:**

Holding onto bitterness can make it difficult to truly let go of the past, even if you consciously choose to forgive.

3. Flee the attempt to tell others about this offense.

One of the real tests of forgiveness is when we are willing to bury the details of the offense. Like a corpse going into a casket, to never be exhumed, we bury the offense in a casket of forgetfulness to never be brought up again.

Oh, this is so hard. As a part of reconciling a conflict, if we have passed it on to third parties, we must go and confess the wrong of talebearing to others and then give a good report to others about how the offense has been reconciled.

4. Forsake the temptation to let the circumstances of the injury raise their ugly head and hinder the relationship.

The only way we can do this is to know what to forgive. We don't use surgery to get rid of every little blemish and we don't use forgiveness to heal every little conflict.

So, when is forgiveness appropriate? Let's turn to author Lewis B. Smedes from Fuller Seminary and get some advice.

We forgive people for what they do, not who they are. We are not called to forgive people for being lazy, arrogant or ethnic. We are not called to forgive because they are blockheads, or dress poorly or are too loud in life. We forgive people for what they do wrong to us.

¹⁸ *If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. (Philemon 18-NIV)*

People do not injure us by being liars, they injure us by lying to us. People don't wrong us being unfaithful, they wrong us by breaching trust.

We forgive people who injure us seriously. The Bible reminds us, *it is to one's glory to overlook an offense. (Prov. 19:11-NIV)*

People bump us in the store, spill ketchup on our clothes, stick their foot in their mouth, and forget to use manners. These are things to be overlooked because we have a magnanimous spirit--the quality of a large spirit. There is a difference between those who are a pain in the neck and those who break a confidence.

Insight: It is difficult to give forgiveness when you are carrying guilt.

There are so many illustrations of Joseph's forgiveness and his brother's receiving mercy, I can't help but laugh and cry every time I read the story in Genesis 37-50. So, what are the odds of Jacob's sons and Joseph's brothers sitting in the exact order from oldest to youngest?

³³ The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴ When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him. (Gen 43-NIV)

Is it possible this man sitting across from them at the head table, knows more about the brothers than meets the eye? Did he really have some supernatural power? All they could do is wonder.

The calculation, if you have not done the math already is 39,917,000 different orders in which the eleven brothers could have been seated.

And for some of you today, that mathematical number represents the odds, probabilities, and chance that you too, would be sitting at this place, watching online in this moment, in these circumstances of your life. These circumstances for many of you are opening a door to forgive. Let it go. Start to forget.

So, why not today, offer to our great God, who is sovereign over the universe and providential over your life, **what he wants from each of us**. What does he want from each of us? Well, Isaiah 30:18 gives us the answer.

*For this reason the LORD is ready to show you mercy;
he sits on his throne, ready to have compassion on you.
Indeed, the LORD is a just God;
all who wait for him in faith will be blessed. (Is 30:18-NET)*

*But God's not finished. He's waiting around to be gracious to you.
He's gathering strength to show mercy to you.
God takes the time to do everything right—everything.
Those who wait around for him are the lucky ones. (Is 30:18-MSG)*

Father,

You are El Shaddai. The God of unlimited power, unending love, and undeserving mercy. No obstacle and no opportunity can stop your providential purpose in my life. Nothing is impossible for you.

Since you know the end of Joseph's story, and my story, you have the ability to convert that which was **meant for evil** and turn it into good.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, I put my faith and confidence in YOU. Make me courageous in offering forgiveness to those who have injured and hurt me.

I ask all of this from the All-Sovereign God of the universe, whose son Jesus Christ died for my pile of sins.

In Jesus Name, Amen.