

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### 5. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others

This section of the prayer deals with the critical principle of forgiveness.

After the sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a lesson on forgiveness.

The lesson begins with Peter's question, "Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?" Peter doesn't literally mean, "I forgive you," seven times over. Instead, at that time, seven was considered the number for perfection. So Peter is in essence asking, "If I forgive perfectly, that should about take care of it, right?" But Jesus response is not really in the affirmative. "Not just seven times," Jesus says, "but...seventy times seven." In other words, your forgiveness must be better than perfect, it must be a perfect perfection. And then Jesus goes on to illustrate just what forgiveness should look like through a parable, known as the "parable of the unforgiving servant."

Now, this parable tells the story of a servant whose lord forgave him much, ten thousand talents, equivalent to several millions of dollars. Yet that same servant was unwilling to forgive another servant who owed him a hundred denarii. A denarius was a day's wage and was worth approximately sixteen cents. Therefore, compared to what the first servant was forgiven, this was a very small amount. The principle here is, "the one forgiven much should forgive much." In other words, the principle of forgiveness is that grace or forgiveness to another is without limit. The disciples are not to count the

number of times they forgive. Rather, as the parable teaches, they are to forgive much because God has forgiven much.

Clearly, forgiveness is serious business. And I do not in any way want to diminish either the seriousness of our failures, nor the extreme difficulty in forgiving those who have wronged us. If we are to receive God's forgiveness, it requires that we repent of our wrongdoing. This means we have to acknowledge that we were wrong, we have to approach God in humility, and we have to seek God's grace. In other words, we essentially turn ourselves over to the mercy of God.

Forgiveness requires a change of our hearts, and it results in a change of our lives.

In the same way, the forgiveness we share with others should not be bestowed lightly.

The truth is, there are terrible, terrible things that people do to one another in this world.

1. Children are abandoned or abused by their drug-addicted parents. The story of Simone Biles and her biological mother has been making the airwaves in recent times.
2. We may know of cases of infidelity in marriages and the damage that that has done.

3. Thieves rob people of their material goods and their sense of security.
4. Terrorists kill innocent civilians in an effort to get some attention.
5. People lie to us, take advantage of us, and bully us.
6. And many of us, no doubt, have been on the receiving end of such hurt at times.

We know it is not easy to forgive, nor is it appropriate to just flippantly forgive such harm.

**It is not easy:**

1. The church in its recognition of error, has written an apology to our indigenous brothers and sisters, for our part in the Residential School Project.
2. The United Church has also drafted an apology to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

There are many who suffer with the scar of hate inflicted on their fore parents:

1. The Transatlantic Slave Trade that killed over 20 million Africans has left many African-Caribbean and African Americans and all peoples of African decent to ponder this thing called forgiveness. Its not been easy!

2. The Nazis' demonstration of hate in murdering over 6 million Jews was not easy to forgive. Many survivors still around the deadly emotional scar.
3. And there are many today who carry around the scar – emotional and otherwise, of hate, betrayal, and mistreatment.

But if, in time:

1. the person or persons or institution that has wronged us, seeks us out, acknowledges their wrongdoing, and genuinely asks for our forgiveness,
2. then Christ's message to us this morning is that we should not withhold it.
3. And even if then, we find it difficult to forgive the person who has hurt us, then at the very least, we should pray to God to help us do what needs to be done.

God does not forgive our sins easily, nor does God expect us to simply blow off the deep pain that others sometimes cause us. But when we can acknowledge the cost of our own mistakes, and let go of the pain and hurt that others have caused us, then we will find ourselves free of a great burden.

1. Forgiveness is life-giving.

2. It is an important part of the abundant life Christ has promised to those who follow him.
3. In fact, forgiveness is the way of life that will mark out the new covenant community.

Still, there is a deeper demand of this text, which is to forgive others as our acceptance of God's forgiveness. **"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."** If we are not willing to share the generous forgiveness that God has shared with us, then we cannot expect that God will continually be so merciful to us.

1. We can allow ourselves to be robbed of life as we keep pain and hurt locked up inside us,
2. or we can let it go.

The key to letting it go is forgiveness; allowing ourselves to forgive and to be forgiven. But grace will not operate if it's not embraced wholeheartedly.

Our lives must make obvious who God is and what God is like. So let us move and live in God's grace, extending to others what has been so freely given to us.