



Forgiveness—Know the Basics from God’s Perspective*

Forgiveness is, literally, at the heart of Christianity. Its meaning is not difficult to understand, but “to forgive” as a way of life is not something one does naturally.

Forgiveness means “to cancel a debt” or “to set aside.” It is not based on feelings but, instead, involves a choice that is, basically, a matter of the will.

Biblical context of forgiveness—Sacrificial Love

God’s Word presents forgiveness in the context of sacrifice, a perspective that greatly impacts the decision to forgive. With this spiritual basis, only certain people can faithfully forgive as the Bible teaches. These persons must first respond to God’s love that is preeminently displayed by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ

Romans 5:6-10, For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. *[Emphasis added]*

Those who accept the love of God described in the above passage will believe in Jesus Christ, realizing that Jesus gave His life to provide forgiveness for their sins.

Ephesians 1:7, In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:4, But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

The Example and Standard of Forgiveness

The demonstration of God’s love—the sacrifice of Jesus—is the perfect example of forgiveness that sets the standard by which God’s children are to forgive others.

Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, *as God in Christ forgave you*. *[Emphasis added]*

The previous verse indicates that a person must receive God’s forgiveness in order to know how to forgive others biblically. In the framework of sacrificial love, biblical forgiveness becomes the “possible impossibility” for believers in Christ who trust God to help them forgive others.

Characteristics of God’s Forgiveness

Since forgiveness begins with God, believers should know the characteristics of

divine forgiveness in order to understand and practice forgiveness of others. Verses referenced earlier reveal aspects of divine forgiveness and, simultaneously, unmask misconceptions of forgiveness. For example:

- God’s forgiveness is freely offered but its cost is beyond our full comprehension.

See [*The Cost of Forgiveness—We Can Only Imagine*](#)

- No one is worthy to receive God’s forgiveness since potential recipients are weak, sinning, unworthy enemies who should receive God’s wrath. God willingly offers forgiveness to those who are truly unworthy to receive it.
- God demonstrated His willingness to forgive due to His love, mercy, and grace. His willingness to forgive is part of His nature and is not conditioned by someone’s confession or deeds of repentance.
- God grants forgiveness initially to those who believe in Christ. Believers are given eternal life, and a new relationship begins between them and their Heavenly Father.

And, there is more . . .

- God is able and is ready to forgive every type and any amount of sin except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 12:31, “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”

When God forgives a person, He no longer relates to that person on the basis of past sinfulness.

Psalms 103:10, He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

- God always forgives when personal sins are truthfully confessed. The relationship between God and a believer in Christ can be vibrant as a believer responds in everyday life to God’s readiness to forgive.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- God removes all guilt (judicial, not emotional) when He forgives.

Romans 8:1, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Believers maturing in Christ realize that forgiveness patterned after God’s example is to be integral to their lives. As a follower of Christ, pray for His help and rely on His power to help you forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven you.

*Excerpted from [*Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility*](#)