Attitudes of the Heart
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Preface

Many churches put an inordinate emphasis on outward conformity and reformation and teach very little on spiritual attitudes of the heart. For this reason, when I became the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in April of 2010, one of my first priorities was to teach a series on internal attitudes that the Holy Spirit desires to produce in every Christian. This book is the culmination of that series.

How to use this Book

Open the Bible. This book is designed for Bible study. In order to fully benefit from the studies contained here, you must be willing to open your Bible and search the scriptures for answers. These studies are based upon the King James Version of the Bible. If you are accustomed to reading another version you may need to have both opened in order to discover the right answers.

Take your Time. The purpose of any Bible study is not to race to the finish line. If your time spent studying scripture does not produce a better understanding of the word of God then it is in vain. Take your time going through these studies. Stop and think about what you’ve read and take the time to apply the truths to your life.

Reflect. Throughout these studies you will see the symbol followed by a question. There is no room to write an answer because these are designed for meditation. Take a minute and think about how the question applies practically to your life. Apply the study and be willing to change where God prompts you to. You will also see questions prefaced by Think. These were originally questions for open discussion in our church. There are no right or wrong answers for these just your own personal opinion.

Pray. Bible truths are only imparted by the Holy Spirit of God. While you study, pray that God would help you to understand and apply His word to your life.

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Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32
And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

As we come to the end of our studies on the *attitudes of the heart*, what we quickly realize is that each and everyone of these attitudes is, in some measure, simply a reflection of the character of Jesus Christ. Each of these is a byproduct of the Spirit of Christ working in us, making us more and more like Him (Rom 8:9; Col 1:27; Gal 4:19). This study’s attitude of *forgiveness* is no different. It is a remarkable attribute of Jesus Christ who came into this world to forgive sinners (Acts 5:31; 1 Tim 1:15; Eph 1:7). Since all Christians have been the beneficiaries of Christ’s forgiveness, He now commands that we also offer forgiveness to one another (Matt 6:14-15; Eph 4:32; Matt 18:21-35).

Eph 4:32. Q. How should we treat one another?

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Q. What example are we following when we forgive one another?

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In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew we find the very first mention of the church. Here Christ is giving instruction to his disciples as to how to handle the issue of forgiveness in the church. As we progress through our look at this attitude of forgiveness, we will consider the *Procedure, Perpetuity and Propagation of Forgiveness* as found in Matthew 18:15-35.
1. The Procedure for Forgiveness – Matthew 18:15-20

The very fact that Jesus saw fit to give these instructions regarding forgiveness is proof that he expected there to be offenses in the church. As a congregation of imperfect people who still struggle with sin we will, at times, offend one another. We will sometimes unknowingly (and sometimes knowingly) hurt each other’s feelings. These offenses are unfortunate but not unexpected. Since we know that these offenses will come, we should prepare for them by learning the Biblical procedure for forgiveness.

First of all, Jesus tells us that if a brother sins against us we are to approach him in confidence.

a. Approach Your Brother in Confidence

Matt 18:15. Q. What should we tell our brother?

Matt 18:15. Q. Who else should we tell?

Matt 18:15. Q. According to the last phrase in this verse, what is our motivation in approaching our brother?

When we are sinned against in the church and find that this offense has damaged our relationship with a brother or sister, our first priority should be the restoration of that relationship. Or as Christ said, we should seek to “gain our brother.” Being motivated with a sincere desire to gain our brother we should then approach our brother privately or “in confidence.”

Think. Why do you think it is important to approach your brother privately and to tell him his fault only between “thee and him alone?”
Oftentimes when we are offended, our first reaction is one of pride. We immediately seek to justify ourselves or to condemn those who have offended us. How do we do this? We begin to look for others who will offer a sympathetic ear to us. Getting others to take up our offense is a surefire way to convince ourselves that we are justified in our bitterness or in withholding our forgiveness.

**Think.** What lasting damage might be caused if an offended brother involves others in the offense?

________________________________________________________________________________

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If, as Christians in the church, we are operating from a starting point of a love for the brethren, then our initial reaction to offenses will not be one of vindictiveness but of love. We will not gossip. We will not tear down the reputation of the sinning brother. We will not share the offense with anyone until we have first sought to be reconciled to our brother.

Consider the following benefits of approaching your brother privately:

I. If it turns out that the offense is simply a misunderstanding then you have protected yourself from spreading misleading gossip.

II. If the sinning brother readily admits his fault and you and he are promptly reconciled, then you have ensured that others will not have a lasting, inaccurate, or negative impression of him. Otherwise, those you have shared the offense with may continue to harbour bitterness toward your brother long after the two of you have reconciled.

III. By refusing to share the offense with others you have protected yourself from reacting emotionally and slandering your brother through gossip. It is possible for your reaction to the offense to be a greater sin than the offense itself (James 1:19-20).

Even when we are offended, our reaction to our fellow Christians must be driven by love. In love we will seek his wellbeing and his restoration. We will seek to protect his reputation and to be reconciled to him quickly. Any other motivation in approaching our brother is invalid and unbiblical.

**Should We Always Approach Our Brother?**

Is there ever a time when it is O.K. to just allow an offense to pass without confronting it? Not only is it O.K. but in some instances it is preferred. Consider the following principles:
I. The Principle of Graceful Suffering

Matt 5:39. Q. In New Testament times a slap on the face was a tremendous insult. To be struck on the face by the hand of another was a demeaning act that robbed its victim of human dignity. Christ chose this insult purposefully, knowing how offensive it was to the Jews. How did Jesus tell us to respond if someone were to hit us on our “right cheek?”

Q. Obviously Jesus is not simply giving us instruction in how to respond to slaps. He was teaching a broader principle about how to respond to offenses. What principle do you think he is teaching when he says “turn to him the other also?”

Here Jesus is teaching us the principle of gracefull suffering. That is, when others offend us we are not to stoop to their level and treat them as they have treated us. Instead, we are to respond with grace exhibiting the same meekness and humility that Christ did when he was abused and reviled (1 Peter 2:23).

Reflect
Has your pride ever prevented you from letting an offense go? How could exercising the principle of graceful suffering have helped you in that situation?

Paul taught the principle of graceful suffering when he dealt with the issue of offenses in the Corinthian church. In chapter 6 of First Corinthians he tells the church how they should have responded when they were sinned against:

1 Cor 6:6-7. Q. How were the Corinthians handling their disagreements with one another?

v7. Q. How did Paul tell the church they should have handled their offenses?
Paul told the Corinthians that they would have been better off if they just learned to “take wrong” and allow
themselves to be “defrauded.” Lawsuits were widespread in Corinth. Neighbours would take each other to court
over even small violations. The church had been so influenced by its culture that it too treated one another with
contempt. There was a constant drive for “justice”, that is, getting what each felt they were owed by others. Paul
told the Corinthians that the behaviour of the world had no place in the church (cf. 1 Cor 13:5).

If each and everyone of us got what we deserved we would be in Hell. Far be it from the forgiven Christian to
seek to exact justice on every brother or sister who offends them (Matt 18:32-33). Paul’s priority was graceful
suffering. It would have been far better if each member, when offended, simply suffered without harbouring
bitterness (Eph 4:31; Heb 12:14-15; James 3:14), and did not retaliate.

There is another principle that we must consider when deciding whether or not we should approach a brother
who has sinned against us and that is The Principle of God’s Sovereignty.

II. The Principle of God’s Sovereignty

Before we become too upset about offenses, we should remember that God is the sovereign of the universe. God
knows everything that we encounter in this life because He is sovereign over circumstance. It may be that he has
brought suffering into our lives for our own good.

James 1:2-5. Q. What should our attitude be when we face trials?

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_________________________________________________________________________

Q. What does the “trying of our faith” do for us?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Q. What is the end result of patience being formed in us?

_________________________________________________________________________

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We should not become upset every time we face trials in our lives. These difficulties actually have a maturing
affect in us. Through hardship we learn patience and this continuing patience produces spiritual maturity.
Whether our trials are financial, circumstancial, or relational, they all contribute to our spiritual growth as we
learn to respond to them in a way that pleases God. Consider Joseph as an example:
Gen 50:19-20. Q. After Joseph had been hated by his brothers, cast in a pit, sold into slavery, falsely accused and put in prison, he finally reunited with his family. Everything Joseph’s brothers did toward him was designed to hurt him. How did Joseph respond to his brothers when they knelt down before him asking forgiveness?

Joseph responded “am I in the place of God?” He recognized God as the Sovereign One who orchestrated every hardship for a purpose. He knew that God could overrule the evil intentions of his brothers and turn their blasting into blessing. Joseph’s understanding of God’s sovereignty enabled him to suffer graciously. Now consider the example of David:

2 Samuel 16:5-12. Q. In this passage we find David and his “mighty men” being confronted by a man from the house of Saul, named Shimei. As Shimei saw David he began to curse him calling him a “bloody man” and “son of Belial” while throwing stones at him. According to verse 9, how did Abishai respond?

v10-11. Q. How did David respond to Abishai and the rest of his servants? What was his reasoning?

v12. Q. What did David suggest that God might do?

David was a king, surrounded by his men of war. He could have easily avenged himself upon Shimei. But David, understanding that God is sovereign, chose rather to let Shimei curse him. David knew that it could have been God who allowed this to happen and that God could avenge him this wrong if He saw fit.

Reflect
God’s sovereignty does not excuse the behaviour of an offensive person but it does help us when we are deciding how to respond. How can you apply David’s example practically next time you are offended?

Both David and Joseph offer us tremendous examples of suffering graciously in light of God’s sovereignty. They absorbed the offenses of others and did not react, knowing that God was in control. Proverbs 19:11 summarizes the principle of graceful suffering well:
The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.


III. The Principle of God’s Justice

1 Pet 2:21-23. Q. What example should we follow when we suffer?

Q. What did Christ not do when others reviled him and caused him pain?

Q. What did he do?

When Christ was beaten and vilified he did not respond in kind. He did not stoop to the level of his abusers and threaten or revile back. This is a remarkable example especially considering the fact that Christ was absolutely sinless and any suffering that he experienced was unjust and undeserved. Christ did not respond to his accusers. Instead, he “commited himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Jesus is teaching us here that there is only one who always judges with righteous judgement and that is God himself (John 8:50). It is far better to commit our cause to God, the righteous judge, than to constantly question whether or not our handling of a situation is right. We know that however God works out the situation, it will be in perfect harmony with his justice.

Psalms 35:1. Q. What did David ask God to do for him?

Psalms 9:4. Q. What did the Psalmist say God did for Him? According to the imagery used here, where was God sitting? Why is this significant?
Psalm 75:7. Q. What is God? What does he do?

The Christian should rely on God as the righteous judge. If we are sinned against and are unsure whether or not we should respond, or how we should handle the situation, it may be better to simply commit our cause to God in prayer and trust him to vindicate us if need be.

A willingness to suffer graciously, a recognition of God’s sovereignty and a submission to God’s justice will go a long way in preventing conflicts in the church. If each of us were to practice these three principles, offenses would rarely escalate to the level of confrontation.

When We Must Approach Our Brother

Now, having seen when it might be better not to approach our brother when we are offended, let’s consider when we must approach our brother. Consider these principles:

I. The Principle of Protection – Of others who are offended

Psalms 82:3-4.

Q. What should we do for the “poor and fatherless?”

Q. What should we do for the “afflicted and needy?”

Q. What should we do for the “poor and needy?”

When we are the only ones offended or sinned against we are perfectly justified in forgiving the offending brother unilaterally. It is completely within our power to decide to suffer graciously and choose not to approach our brother. This is not the case when we observe others, especially weaker brothers, being sinned against. In these cases, God encourages us to protect the weaker brother. See Galatians 2:11-14 where Paul recounts his confrontation with Peter on behalf of the Gentile believers.

Think. How might a stronger Christian be guilty of offending a weaker Christian? (consider the principles found in 1 Corinthians 8)
II. The Principle of Intervention - In the life of the sinning brother

1 Cor 5:4-5. Q. In this passage we read about a man in the Corinthian church who was guilty of committing adultery. The church had overlooked the fault even though it was “commonly reported” among them (1 Cor 5:1). According to verse 5, how did Paul instruct the church to deal with this brother?

Q. According to the latter part of verse 5, what was the motivation for “delivering such an one unto Satan?” for the destruction of the flesh?”

Sometimes it is important to confront a brother over his sin in order to prevent him from continuing down a path of personal destruction. The Corinthians had to make some severe judgments on behalf of this sinning brother but even this was for his own good. It is not helpful to ignore or avoid confrontation in the name of “keeping the peace” if it means allowing a brother to continue in a pattern of living that will be detrimental to him in the long run.

III. The Principle of Purification – Of the body of Christ

1 Cor 5:6. Q. Paul goes on to give another motivation for confronting this brother. Why did he say the “glorying” (or boasting), of the Corinthians was not good?

What Paul is saying is that this one man, having been permitted to continue in sin, could have had a sinful influence on the entire church (Heb 12:15). Just as a little bit of yeast spreads and permeates the entire loaf of
bread, sin also spreads in the church thereby defiling the entire congregation. Paul told the church that they should not have been boasting, but rather mourning over the sin in their midst (1 Cor 5:2).

When sinful or offensive activities are continuing in the church body than it is the church’s responsibility to approach the sinning brother and confront him over his sin. The purpose in confronting the brother is to protect his own spiritual wellbeing and to maintain purity in the church. (cf. Acts 5:1-11).

**IV. The Principle of Reconciliation – Of both you and the offender**

Another principle that we must consider when deciding whether or not we should approach our brother is that of reconciliation. Because God desires perfect unity in the body of Christ (Eph 4:2-3; John 17:21-23), we must seek to be reconciled to our brother whenever a relationship is harmed through offenses (Matt 5:23-24; Matt 18:15).

📖 Matt 5:23-24. Q. Using the context of a man bringing a sacrifice to the altar, Jesus gives us a principle regarding reconciliation. What does the man mentioned here remember?

________________________________________________________________________

Q. Is this man the offender or the offended? ______________________________________

The idea here is that this man, while preparing to offer his sacrifice to God, remembers that he has, in some way, offended a brother in Christ. Once he remembers that he has caused an offense and that a fellow Christian has something against him, he should go and be reconciled to his brother and then come back and offer his sacrifice. This again emphasizes the fact that God is unreceptive to worship from Christians who refuse to reconcile with one another (Matt 6:14-15; Matt 18:21-35).

📖 Matt 18:15. Q. In the previous passage we saw a man who remembered that he had offended a brother. How is this passage different?

________________________________________________________________________

Q. What does Jesus tell this offended brother to do?

________________________________________________________________________

Q. Considering both Matt 5:23-24 and Matt 18:15 above, who is responsible for approaching their brother, the person who is offended or the person who caused the offense?
Think. If both the one who is offended and the one who caused the offense would follow the principles above, What do you think the result be in the church would be?

Jesus said that mutual Christian love in the church would be clear evidence that we are his disciples (John 13:35); consequently, he has placed a tremendous emphasis on unity and reconciliation in the church (1 Cor 1:10; Php 1:27; 2:1-2). If we have been offended, we should approach our brother, seeking reconciliation (Matt 18:15). If we have offended others, we should also approach our brother, seeking reconciliation (Matt 5:23-24). The desire for unity in the church and the desire to exhibit Christ-like love should motivate both brothers to be reconciled.

In review, so far we have seen that when we are offended we should Approach our Brother in Confidence. We learned that before we approach our brother we should consider the principles of Gracious Suffering, God’s Sovereignty and God’s Justice. We also learned that there are some principles that demand that we approach our brother; namely, The Principles of Protection, Intervention, Purification, and Reconciliation.

If we follow these principles and it results in the “gaining of our brother” than no other action is necessary. But, if our brother refuses to “hear us” and does not respond to our efforts of reconciliation or our confrontation of his sin, than Jesus gives us another step which we should follow. He tells us that we should approach this unresponsive brother “with counsel.”

b. Approach Your Brother with Counsel

Matt 18:16. Q. What does Jesus tell us to do if our brother “will not hear” us?

Here we are told that we should tell our situation to one or two other Christians who can act as objective witnesses (“that…every word may be established”). These men or women can act as mediators or judges. They can view the conflict with fresh eyes and help to determine whether there has been a misunderstanding or a legitimate offense.
1 Cor 6:5. Q. As we have already seen in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is dealing with the fact that the Corinthians were taking one another to court to settle their disputes. Paul rebukes them for this practice. What did he expect there to be in the church?

Deut 19:15. Q. What did God forbid here?

Q. How did God say the matter should be established?

The use of two or three witnesses is a biblical principle stretching all the way back to the book of Deuteronomy. If the situation with our sinning brother is to rise to the level where the church body becomes involved these witnesses can serve as confirmation of the offense.

Think. Why is it a good principle to not always accept the testimony of only one accuser?

If approaching our brother privately has failed and we must avail ourselves to this second step, we should be sure that our motivations are pure and that we are not involving others for the sake of justification, or because we are looking for people to take up our offense. We should be motivated by a sincere desire to be reconciled to our brother, to keep the church pure, or to intervene in the life of a sinning brother for his spiritual wellbeing. The best practice would be to seek the elders of the church or other men and women who have a reputation of spiritual maturity and discernment.

Jesus goes on to give us yet another step in this procedure. If our brother refuses to hear us privately and refuses to hear the Godly witnesses which we have involved, then we are to approach our brother as a congregation.

c. Approach Your Brother as a Congregation

Matt 18:17. Q. If your brother refuses to hear you and also refuses to hear the two or three witnesses, then what should be done?
Step three in this procedure, after two or three witnesses have deemed there to be a legitimate trespass or offense, is to bring the situation before the church (1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Cor 2:6-7). Here, the church acts in unity to admonish the sinning brother and seeks to restore him to fellowship (Gal 6:1-2). This restoration can happen only after repentance and reconciliation (Luke 17:3).

**Think.** Why do you think it is important for the church to act in unity in this matter?

If the sinning brother does not heed the admonition of the church then he has made it clear that he is no longer in submission to the authority of the church. The church then has no choice but to move on to step four in this procedure for church discipline – *Remove your brother from your company.*

**d. Remove Your Brother From Your Company**

📖 Matt 18:17. Q. In the worst case scenario, this brother will refuse to repent of his sin and be reconciled to the church. What did Jesus tell the church they should then do?

Lastly, Jesus tells us that if our brother has not taken heed to our desire for reconciliation, or our admonishment for his sin, neither has he obeyed the counsel of two or three witnesses, nor has he submitted himself to the authority of the church, then the next step is to remove him from our fellowship.

Paul confirms this principle in his epistles to the Thessalonians and Corinthians:

📖 2 Thess 3:14-15. Q. What was the church to do with a brother who was unwilling to obey the letter that Paul had written?

📖 1 Cor 5:11-13. Q. How did Paul tell the Corinthians they should relate to a brother who is continuing in the sins mentioned here?
It is no small matter for a Christian man or woman to reject the efforts of the church to reconcile him to their fellowship. The church is the very body and bride of Jesus Christ and operates with his authority and on his behalf. When we obey Christ in dealing with these matters we are executing His will on earth. This is made plain in Matthew 18:18-20.

Matt 18:18-20. Q. What will be “bound” and “loosed” in heaven?

Remember, this passage is still in the context of the procedure for forgiveness and discipline in the church. What Jesus is saying is that when the church follows the biblical pattern of church discipline and executes judgment or restoration, than they are performing his will on earth. When they, as a church body stand in agreement concerning their judgment against sin in the church, he will affirm and bless their decision insofar as they have correctly followed his instructions. He then promises his presence and his authority in matters of judgment when he states in Matt 18:20, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Think. How should Christ’s promises in Matt 18:18-20 encourage the church to confront sin and offenses in the church instead of avoiding confrontation at all costs?

The church who does not employ this procedure for forgiveness, or in the worst case scenario, church discipline, does not operate with the authority of Christ and does not have the promise of Christ’s approval on matters of judgment. It is the faithful adherence to Christ’s commands in Matthew 18 that brings his blessing and authority upon the church.

Are you so committed to the purity of the church that you would be willing to approve of the removal of a sinning brother who has not responded to any of the steps listed above? Why or Why not?
It is sometimes easy to ignore sin or offenses in the church in the name of “keeping the peace.” This is a foolish thing to do as it foreits Christ’s blessing. He desires the unity and purity of his church and has for this reason commanded the church to confront sin and seek reconciliation when necessary.

The church who wants to be blessed by Christ will follow his *procedure for forgiveness*.

### 2. The Perpetuity of Forgiveness – Matthew 18:21-22

**Matt 18:21.** Q. After Jesus taught the proper procedure to follow to deal with forgiveness in the church, what question did Peter ask?

Having heard Christ’s prescription for forgiveness, Peter wonders at what point the Christian should be allowed to withhold forgiveness. What if our brother keeps offending us? What if asks forgiveness but sins against us again? Surely there is a limit!

**Matt 18:22.** Q. How did Jesus answer Peter’s question?

Jesus is not telling Peter that he should forgive his erring brother 490 times. He is using a figure of speech to illustrate the *perpetuity of forgiveness*. That is, we should be willing to forgive our brother as many times as he sincerely repents and seeks our forgiveness. In doing so, we are modelling the longsuffering forgiveness that our Lord has shown to us.

**1 John 1:9.** Q. What will God do if we confess our sins?

Q. How is God described in this verse? ________________________________________________________________________

Q. Has God put a limit on how many times we can come and confess our sin? ________________________________________

**Eph 4:32.** Q. Who should we try to emulate when we forgive others? ________________________________________

God’s forgiveness is unending. When we come to God, repenting of our sin, we can count on Him being faithful to forgive us our sins. As beneficiaries of this endless forgiveness, we should be willing to show the same mercy to our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Matthew 18:23-35, Christ goes on to illustrates this truth.

Matt 18:23-35. Q. As the king in this parable takes account of all that he is owed, a servant is brought to him in verse 24, how much did this servant owe him?

Ten thousand talents is a huge amount that this servant was entirely incapable of paying (v25). The king ordered this man, his wife and his children to be sold into slavery in order to pay the debt. The servant fell down and begged the king to spare him and his family.

Matt 18:27. Q. How did the king respond to the servant’s pleading?

Q. What was it that “moved” the king to forgive his servant?

Think. Remember that this is a parable. Who do you think the king represents? How about the servant?

We all owe a debt incurred by our sin against God. We are incapable of making payment for this sin, but God, through his compassionate forgiveness, has freed us from this debt (Rom 6:18-22). Just as God has forgiven us a debt that we could not pay (Eph 2:1; Rom 5:6-8; Col 2:13), the king in this parable has forgiven his servant.

Matt 18:28. Q. What did the forgiven servant do to one of his fellowservants?

Q. How much did his fellowservant owe him?
This man, who was forgiven an insurmountable debt by his compassionate lord, turned around and withheld forgiveness from his fellowservant. Worse than that, his fellowservant owed him far less than what he had owed. This man had his fellowservant cast into prison until he could pay the paltry sum. When others witnessed the servants heartlessness, especially in light of the compassion he was shown, they went and told his lord.

Matt 18:32-34. **Q.** How did the king describe his servant? ____________________________________________

**Q.** Why did the king expect that his servant would have been more forgiving in his dealings with others?

________________________________________________________________________________________

Just like the servant in this parable, we are all indebted to God because of our sin (Matt 6:12); we are all unable to pay the debt that our sin has incurred (Col 2:13; Eph 2:1; Rom 5:6); and, we are all undeserving of the forgiveness that our Lord has given us (Rom 5:8). Furthermore, just as this servant was expected to forgive his fellowservants in light of his lord’s forgiveness, we too are expected to forgive fellow Christians in light of the forgiveness that our Lord has shown us.

**Q.** v34. How did the king respond to his servants lack of compassion?

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**Q.** In verse 35, Jesus makes a very plain application of this parable, what is it in your own words?

________________________________________________________________________________________

The unforgiving servant in this parable is a striking illustration of the unforgiving Christian. Using this servant as an example, consider what happens when the Christian forgets that he is indebted, unable, and undeserving.

1. v28. He withholds forgiveness for far less than what God has forgiven him
2. v30. He shows far less compassion than God has shown him
3. v31. He forfeits peace and unity among his fellows
4. v34. He faces the discipline of his Lord

God expects us to show the same compassionate forgiveness to our fellow Christians that he has shown to us. Our indebtedness to God for his unconditional forgiveness should lead us to freely forgive our brethren. God is so concerned that we propagate this forgiveness that he will withhold forgiveness from the Christian who does not forgive his brother.

Matt 6:14. **Q.** When will the Father forgive us our “trespasses?”

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Matt 6:15. Q. When will the Father *not* forgive us our “trespasses?”

Think. The forgiveness which brings salvation to the sinner is unconditional. If the sinner will repent and believe the gospel, he will receive forgiveness. But the forgiveness that God offers to his children, the forgiveness that maintains a right relationship with Him *after* salvation, is not unconditional. Based upon the above verses, what is the condition? Why do you think God has made this a condition?

Conclusion

Spiritual growth and Christ-likeness in the life of a believer will lead him to practice forgiveness. On the other hand, a lack of forgiveness in the life of a Christian is an indication of a spiritual problem. It reveals that he has forgotten what God has done for him and it exposes his unloving heart. The man who is closest to God is furthest from pride. He understands the indebted, unable, and undeserving state that he was in when God forgave him and responds by freely offering the same unconditional forgiveness to others.

In closing, remember that no matter how forgiving and compassionate we are toward others, it will always pale in comparison to what God the Father has done for us through Jesus Christ. He is never content to simply offer forgiveness, but with that forgiveness he lavishes upon his children all the blessings of heaven. (Eph 1:3-14).
Review: Forgiveness

1. Why do you think we can expect to experience offenses in the church?

2. Before we approach a brother about an offense, what attitude should we ensure we are operating from?

3. Why are some of the benefits of approaching our brother privately about an offense?

4. How will the principle of graceful suffering help to maintain unity in the church?

5. How does understanding God’s sovereignty help us to handle offenses?

6. How can a trust in God’s justice help us when we are offended?

7. How does approaching an offending brother help him?

8. How does the purity of the church demand that we approach our brother?

9. Why is it a good idea to approach your brother with counsel if he will not hear you?

10. Why must a church practice church discipline in order to have Christ’s blessing upon it?

11. Why should God’s forgiveness toward us motivate us to show forgiveness to others?