

Nathan Rambeck -- Biblical Forgiveness - Practicing Forgiveness

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[0 : 00] So, I guess we announced Children's Church, so that's great, sometimes we forget to do that. But I will say, you know, if anybody wants to keep their kids with them, that's also great too.

One of the things I love is, you know, we kind of have church services at our house sometimes, you know. We go through the Bible and study the Bible, and I love all the sounds that the kids make.

Like, my kids are older now, so they don't make funny noises anymore. Well, sometimes they do. But it is a blessing to hear children at any time.

So, let's see, what else before we get started here? Oh, I have a couple of resources here. This is a book that I pitched a few weeks back, but this is a book called Law and Grace.

And at this church, we try to make a clear distinction between law and grace. And I think some churches do better than others at doing that.

[1 : 09] You know, some people say that, you know, keeping the Sabbath is grace, or things like that. And we try to make a more clear difference.

This is a book by a guy who ran a seminary out in Indiana, Alva McLean. Short book.

I like short books because it's hard for me to get through big ones. But just full of scriptures. If this is a topic you have thought about and are not sure you quite get the difference between law and grace in the Bible, this is a great one to get for Bible study purposes.

And I think we have a bunch of these on the back. Also, on the topic of forgiveness, one of the things I brought up as a question is the unpardonable sin. And I know that I've talked to people over the years who have lots of questions about that.

What is the unpardonable sin? Have I committed the unpardonable sin? You know, will God, is there something that God is withholding forgiveness for me regarding, concerning?

[2 : 16] And we have this little pamphlet, tract, I don't know what to call it. It's really short. Called The Unpardonable Sin. And it gets into just trying to provide a little bit of a summary of what is that?

And how should we as Christians, especially Christians under grace, how do we understand the unpardonable sin that Jesus talked about? So if that's something you ever thought about, I would recommend going back there on the little literature rack or whatever we call it and grab one of those.

But we'll go ahead and get started with the message today. So we've been talking about forgiveness. And this is our third week.

And the first week we talked about forgiveness in relation to man and God. Talked about that as a vertical aspect of forgiveness.

And then last week we talked about forgiveness and relationship between each other. We might think about that as a horizontal forgiveness. And just trying to lay a foundation for what is forgiveness?

[3 : 32] How does God do forgiveness? Using that as a foundation for how should we do forgiveness? Is the forgiveness that we do, is that different from how God does it?

Or is it similar? And I think for most things, we ought to forgive as God forgives. And so just a few things that we talked about, just trying to provide an overview.

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is putting away some kind of debt. When it comes to finances, that's a common arena in which we talk about forgiveness and debt.

With finances, with money, you have a debt on your account. And if it's forgiven, it's removed from the accounting. It's taken away. We also have, though, what we might call moral debts, where we've offended.

We've sinned against someone, whether we've sinned against God or whether we've sinned against a neighbor or a brother. And in that case, it's similar. It's the same.

[4 : 36] There's a debt that we owe, a sin debt, whether we owe it to God or whether we owe it to our neighbor. And that debt can be forgiven, and it's put away. It's taken off of the record books, if you will, off of the accounting.

And then what is the purpose of forgiveness? The purpose of forgiveness, the ultimate purpose, is reconciliation. When it comes to us and God, God wants to be reconciled to us.

We read all these scriptures about the Lord wanting to dwell with his people. From the very beginning in the garden, God walked in the garden with Adam. To, in Israel, we see this tabernacle being built.

And that's where God wanted to dwell among his people, in this tabernacle and then eventually a temple. And then today, in this age of grace in which God has a personal relationship with each one of us, in which the Bible says that he lives in us.

He dwells with us, both in our bodies. The Bible says that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And also, we are what the Bible calls the body of Christ together.

[5 : 47] For those who are believers, we are the body of Christ. And he dwells with us as that body. And then in the future, when there's a new heaven and a new earth, the Bible talks about God himself will be like the temple.

And that we will live and dwell with him, ultimately, into eternity. But that's the purpose of forgiveness, reconciliation, that we might dwell with God and with each other, that we might live and dwell with each other in peace.

When there's a debt, when there's an offense, it causes what? A separation. And that's what we want to heal. That's what we want to get rid of, is that separation. And then, what is the extent of that forgiveness?

God's mercies are without end. So, do we just forgive once? Does God just forgive one time? In the Old Testament, there was the once a year.

And then God shows us that his forgiveness is without end. It is abundant in its nature. And then, likewise, we should be willing to forgive up to, what, 70 times 7, which is a big number, but it's meant to communicate what?

[7 : 04] Without end. That we ought to forgive as many times as is necessary. We talked a little bit about conditions of forgiveness. Is forgiveness automatic?

Is something that we just pass out without any regard for condition? Does there need to be any kind of repentance or apology? And we talked about our relationship with God.

And God does expect of us that we would turn. Repentance means to turn. You turn away from the sin and we turn to him. It's an act of humility. And that's a key thing in forgiveness, right?

That's the hardest part of forgiveness. Forgiveness, as far as the words, are easy to say. But the hardest part of any forgiveness is what that change of your heart, that humbling of your heart. And humility can be very difficult.

And so when it comes to forgiveness between each other, are there conditions? Do we need to require an apology first? Or do we just forgive automatically?

[8 : 06] And we talked a little bit about the difference between kind of more modern definitions of forgiveness that is part of a modern psychology. Some people might call it and have called it a therapeutic view of forgiveness, where the forgiveness that we exercise is something that's more done for our own healing, for ourselves.

It's a gift. Some people have said that you give yourself when you forgive because it releases you from maybe pain or bitterness or resentment and those kinds of things. And it's not like that's completely untrue.

But I think, and we talked about this last week, that the Bible teaches that forgiveness is not meant, is not something that we do for ourselves. Forgiveness is something that we do for others.

When someone has offended us, we don't forgive them so that we can be healed, even though that might happen. Ultimately, we want the relationship to be healed.

And it's a gift that we give to somebody else out of love because that's what God did for us. God doesn't forgive us so that he can have some kind of healing, so that he can improve his mental health, so that he can overcome depression, or any of those kinds of things.

[9 : 22] The Bible says that God offers forgiveness because of his great love and mercy for us. And so we ought to take the same approach to forgiveness. So, with laying that kind of foundation, today I'd like to get into just practically what does forgiveness look like in our lives.

And we passed out some cards to write down some questions and some comments. And so I wrote those down, and we'll try to answer some of those. We'll see if time allows, what time looks like.

Maybe we'll take some live questions. So if you think of anything, write it down or put it away. I have to write things down because I can never remember. But if you have a really good memory, just file it away, and maybe we'll have live questions.

But try not to make them too hard. So what does forgiveness look like on a day-to-day basis? How often do we have an opportunity for forgiveness?

At least once a month, right? There's some kind of opportunity. Is it more than that? Once a week, maybe? Do we have opportunities for forgiveness daily?

[10 : 43] Yeah, I think that could possibly be the case. And we would hope not, right? I mean, forgiveness is where there's some kind of hurt, some kind of sin, and we certainly don't want to be hurting each other or sinning against one another, but it's often the case that there might be an opportunity to go through that process of reconciliation and forgiveness, even on a daily basis.

Hopefully not with big things, but with small things. And I think it's with the small things that we have this opportunity to practice forgiveness.

I was just saying, right? Practice makes perfect. When you practice something, you get good at it. And when you practice small things, practice especially with something like forgiveness, there are minor offenses, and then there are major offenses.

And if we can practice forgiveness with the minor things, then when bigger things come up, we'll be well equipped. There's a verse in 1 Timothy 4, verse 7.

Paul, speaking to Timothy, says this, Reject profane and old wives' fables and exercise yourself towards godliness. He's talking about exercise.

[12 : 02] It's this thing that you do, you practice exercise. Exercise, you talk about like baseball practice or in sports, you're practicing something. You're getting good at it. We exercise ourself to godliness, and we get good at it.

For bodily exercise, profits a little bit. Exercising our body has a little bit of profit. It's good to exercise our body, to keep our body healthy.

But godliness is profitable for all things. It's having promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come. And I think forgiveness is part of what he's talking about, that godliness.

Exercising ourselves to godliness. And so we can do these little exercises. Anybody lift weights? Maybe it's those little ones. Or go jogging or running, doing push-ups.

I try to do it, but I'm so bad. I fall off the wagon and then get back on. I fall off the wagon. But when I do a good job of keeping consistent, right, you build those muscles, and you get stronger.

[13 : 08] So like I said earlier, the mechanics can be pretty simple. The mechanics of forgiveness can be pretty simple. A lot of times the hard part is that heart part, the humility, humbling ourselves, especially before others.

So if we practice the fundamentals of, the fundamental principles of forgiveness every day with the little things, when big things come up, it won't be as hard.

And a lot of times if we practice them with small things, it will avoid the bigger things. Because how many of you know that a small offense can grow over time, right?

One little offense, if it's left undealt with, can grow into a big one. Now, there is no one way to practice forgiveness.

I'm going to provide some principles, some tips, some recommendations. Some of them will come straight out of the Bible. Others will be more just kind of matters of wisdom, I think.

[14 : 11] So forgiveness may look different in different scenarios and for different people. So we don't necessarily need to be caught up with all the exact specifics.

But we have this opportunity to practice these principles with especially a family, right? Family, brothers and sisters, moms and dads, husbands and wives, friends, neighbors, coworkers.

And so going back to this concept of wisdom, it requires wisdom to put something into practice. The Bible provides lots of principles. You even specifically look at the book of Proverbs.

And there's something that comes to mind. I love this. It's so interesting. But in Proverbs chapter 26, there's two verses. They're right next to each other. Proverbs chapter 26, verse 4 says this.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Imagine this. You have a fool.

[15 : 20] He's being foolish. You know what? Just ignore him. Don't try to correct him because you're just going to end up being just like him if you do that.

And then verse 5 says this. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. Well, what in the world?

Didn't they just say, don't answer a fool? We have two verses right next to each other saying the exact opposite thing. It seems. But I think it's a brilliant thing that's put in there, I think, by the sage, if you will, whoever wrote that, chapter 26.

I'm not sure off the top of my head. But I think the idea is, listen, in some cases, it's appropriate to answer a fool so that he won't be wise in his own eyes.

But in other circumstances, just ignore him. Don't answer him because it's just going to cause more trouble. And so, but what do we need?

[16:28] We need wisdom to know how to make the difference. When do you answer a fool? When do you ignore him? And so, that's the hard part of living the Christian life.

We have lots of great principles that creates a framework for how we ought to do things and specifically and also with forgiveness. But how we play that out, there's so many different scenarios of forgiveness and offenses and repentance and not repentance and apologies and not apologies.

And so, it requires forgiveness. There's not a Bible verse for every single scenario that might come up. The Bible talks, I think it's in Romans, I'm thinking of about people being inventors of evil things.

There's no end of how people might offend one another, right? People, we tend to be very creative. So, with that said, let's kind of dig in here. So, the first thing I want to look at, and if you have a Bible, let's look at this scripture.

It's in Proverbs chapter 19. It's verse 11. Proverbs chapter 19, verse 11. It says this, The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression.

[17:47] I'll read that again. The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression. So, the first thing I want to talk about is actually not forgiveness.

This is talking about overlooking a transgression. forgiveness is not overlooking something. Forgiveness is when you have something on an account, and you do something to put it away.

It's something on the ledger, and you put it away. That's forgiveness. Overlooking something is just never adding it to the account to begin with. And there are times when there are things that are done against us where it's most appropriate and better for relationships if we just let it pass.

Don't add it to the account. Just let it go. Ignore it. And this might be something, this is a lot easier to do, I think, with strangers, right? Sometimes it's hard for us, but imagine traffic, right?

That's the, it's easy to get offended, right, by that, you know, in some parts of the country and parts of the world are more notorious regarding traffic violations or offenses than others.

[19:16] But somebody cuts you off. You know, somebody takes that parking spot that they, I'm sure they knew that I was waiting for that and they took it.

And we can let those things get to us, can't we? Or, we can say, you know what? I'm sure they're having a bad day. Maybe they're not.

Anyway, regardless, I'm not going to put that on any account. I'm just not going to register it. I'm just going to let it go. It's easier, I think, to do that with strangers. The closer we are to somebody, maybe the harder that can be.

But I think this is something that should only apply to trivial matters. When it comes to larger things, we shouldn't overlook them because it does.

It causes a rift in our relationships and we need to deal with them. Overlooking something is not dealing with it. But I think there are some cases where we should just overlook things.

[20 : 20] Don't deal with it. Don't make a big deal about it. There's another verse that I think talks about this in Colossians. So we looked at an Old Testament verse, we'll look at a New Testament one, a letter from Paul here, Colossians 3.13.

And he's just teaching about how Christians ought to live with one another and he says this, forbearing one another, again, Colossians 3.13, forbearing one another and forgiving one another.

If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, also, excuse me, so also do ye. so we should forbear and we should forgive.

It mentions two things and he makes the distinction. You have forgiveness where there's a debt on the account that should be put away but then there's also just the forbearing and that means they kind of just suffer through, just put up with it.

So there are times when we should just put up with things and there are other times where we shouldn't, we need to have a transaction of forgiveness. So there's a distinction there I think.

[21 : 35] Overlooking a transgression, forbearing with others, I think those are similar in nature. Alright, so maybe a little bit more about what this looks like.

Our family loves to watch the Andy Griffith show. Does anybody ever watch Andy Griffith? Oh man, it's got to be the best show ever in the history of television.

It's just, one, it's hilarious, right? And who made the show? What character made that show? Barney Fife, without a doubt.

If you disagree, you're just wrong. Barney Fife made that show. In fact, we talk about, we have, I think, I don't know if we own all the seasons or whatever, there's like six or seven seasons.

But the first three seasons have Barney Fife and then he left the show. And the rest of the show is, it's okay, but just very different. Barney Fife made that show. Don Knotts is the actor's name.

[22 : 41] But there's an episode which is called Citizen's Arrest. And I hear some chuckles, so I think some of you know this episode. And in this episode, Barney Fife, in his typical kind of overzealous manner, he decides that he is going to lay down the law.

And I can't remember all the details, I just remember in generalities, but he decides he's going to lay down the law, and I don't know if he was on his own, and so he had to make sure that he was keeping the peace or the law or whatever, but he just becomes way overzealous and handing out tickets for minor pedestrian violations, jaywalking, you know, minor traffic violations of not parking in the right spot or taking a small U-turn where you're not supposed to.

And he does this with basically the entire town. So the entire town is just fed up to here with Barney Fife and his just egregious, obnoxious upholding of the law.

And eventually the character, I think probably the second best character maybe, that one's debatable though, is Gomer Pyle. And he's up to here and he sees Barney Fife in his cruiser and he just turns around and does this U-turn in the street.

And he comes over and he says, citizens arrest, citizens arrest. And Barney Fife, of course, what's going on? He's just outraged that this whole thing would happen.

[24 : 24] But then the whole town comes in and they're all like, yeah, citizens arrest, Barney, you need to give yourself a ticket and all this kind of stuff. It plays out hilariously. But this, I think, is just a great example of where Barney, he went overboard, right?

We can do this with the law. In fact, I think a lot of times our law is abused, right? Where we have, how many laws do we have on the books in this country?

A gazillion? and you can't go a day, you can't go an hour, a minute sometimes without having some kind of infraction of some kind of rule or regulation somewhere.

And some people abuse that and they'll find any opportunity to give somebody a jaywalking ticket. I remember actually, specifically, I was part of a pro-life event.

We were doing some demonstrations and the police, in this case specifically, didn't like what we were doing. And they just, as soon as somebody set foot on a street, they would pass out a jaywalking fine.

[25 : 34] It was just highly egregious. But we don't want to do that, right? We don't want to do that on our relationships with others. With Barney, he basically ruined his relationship with the entire town because of his egregious use of the law.

And instead of him handing out tickets for each and every one of these minor infractions, what should he have done? Just what his boss, Andy, did is you just overlook it.

Somebody didn't park in the right spot, maybe they weren't right in between the lines. You know what? Just overlook it. So, we should do that in our lives.

Somebody borrowed something, they never gave it back. That might be an example where we just, okay, well, I'll just buy another book that I never got back.

Somebody makes a rude or insensitive comment, I'll just overlook it. It's not something that they do all the time. They probably didn't even realize it.

[26 : 36] So, I'm just going to pass it by. And so, I think there's a wisdom principle in how to determine, how to decide when we overlook things.

And I think it just goes back to the golden rule. And most people know this. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. So, if we see something, if somebody does something to us, we can kind of think through, you know, if the shoe was on the other foot, if we were in opposite positions, would I want them to make a big deal about it?

Would I think that it would be appropriate or reasonable for them to make a big deal about it? If not, then I shouldn't either. So, but at the same time, just to wrap this piece up, I do think that we should be careful, though, because little offenses can pile up, can't they?

That rude comment that gets made one day, and then the next day, and then the next day, that demeaning comment that said once, oh, they probably didn't mean it, but over time, over days, weeks, sometimes years, it can pile up into a real major offense.

And cause that separation between people that we want to deal with. And so, even though offenses might be minor, we need to keep in mind, if they pile up, we need to address them.

[28 : 07] We need to take care of them. All right. So that was minor offenses, overlooking things. The next thing we'll look at is what's talked about in Luke 17.3.

If you open up your Bible there, Luke 17.3, Jesus gives instruction, and this is a more truncated view or version of this than in Matthew 18, but they're the same, I think the same account.

But Luke 17 is a little bit briefer. He says this, take heed to yourselves, or excuse me, take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him.

And if he repents, forgive him. And this is where we talked about conditions. Are conditions required in the transaction of forgiveness?

And I think it should be. When we have a real offense, a major offense, right? We talked about the minor ones, the trivial ones, but when we have an offense that has done something, whether it's inside of you internally or whatever, that is creating this separation, this relational rift, then it needs to be taken care of through a process of forgiveness.

[29 : 24] But the first step ought to be, and it doesn't necessarily always have to be, but if forgiveness doesn't come right away, then there needs to be a rebuke.

And that word sounds very severe, right? Rebuking somebody, you think of yelling at somebody or something like that, I think a lot of times. But the word doesn't necessarily mean that in that kind of severity.

A rebuke is just a correction of some kind. And corrections can be gentle or they can be severe. And I think the situation warrants whether rebukes should be gentle or whether they should be severe.

If somebody is doing something very dangerous, for example, they're putting people's lives in danger, your rebuke should be very severe. But if there's something that's an infraction that is not that way, then we should be gentle in our rebukes, in our corrections.

There's another, the other side of this, or the other, if we look in Matthew chapter 18, verse 15, this is the same account, I believe, with Jesus talking about forgiveness.

[30 : 46] And Matthew puts the words in a little bit of a different way, and he says this, moreover, if your brother sins against you, remember Luke said, rebuke him, but in Matthew he says, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

same thing. One, he uses the term rebuke, a correction. The other, it's just tell him his fault. I mean, that's the basics of a, quote, rebuke, a correction.

If somebody has sinned against you, and they don't know it, or they don't recognize it, let's say, and don't offer something right off the bat, then there's this exercise, this step that we need to take, where we, what we would commonly call today is, I think, ask for an apology.

You ask someone for an apology. Somebody did something to you, they offended you in some way, and you ask them for an apology. If we continue on, and if you haven't turned there yet, we'll look at Matthew 18.

We'll continue on with that. this whole passage is in the context of a brother, somebody who is a brother in the faith.

[32 : 12] In this case, this was Israel, because remember Christ Jesus, he ministered to Israel during his earthly ministry. And so, he's saying, if your brother sinned against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he hears you, you have gained your brother. So, I think the first principle here is, go to somebody in private. If somebody has offended you, and you confront in public, or you bring others with you right away, there's a risk with that.

And I think it's not necessarily wrong in and of itself, maybe, depending on what the infraction was. But here's what I see as the risk, and maybe there's something else in mind that Jesus has in mind in recommending this approach, or in giving this approach.

But what I think about is when you confront somebody with something, it's hard enough to humble yourself to one person, right?

It's hard enough to say, wow, you're right, to one person. But what happens when you add two people, or five people, or a hundred people, right?

[33 : 31] Humbling yourself before a group is extra hard than humbling yourself before one person. So if we can confront somebody just one-on-one in private, start gently, and we hope that with just a gentle confrontation, one-on-one, we can get that reconciliation, we can get that other side of forgiveness, forgiveness, where that forgiveness is offered and accepted.

But then he continues on, and he says, but if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

And this whole concept of two or three witnesses is something from the Old Testament scriptures, scriptures, and a lot of it is used in reference to legal sense.

When you have an accusation of a crime, judges will a lot of times, even today, but under the Old Testament law, if you just had an accusation without any kind of evidence, whether it's eyewitness testimony or something else, then you can't convict somebody on that just based on the word of one person, right?

That would be highly risky, right? You can see how that might be abused. Today, we have this kind of thing going on, depending on your political persuasion, like people will use this as a political football, like what's the, oh, just believe women, right?

[35 : 08] You've heard that one, when it comes to accusations of harassment or things like that. And of course, that's incorrect.

we should believe people when they're telling the truth, right? Regardless of whether they're a man or a woman, whether they're rich or poor, regardless of anything, we want to know what the truth is.

And so, the Bible establishes this principle in the Old Testament of two or three witnesses. Two is sufficient, three is even better, right? If you can get two, then you're on really solid ground.

Three, it's basically a closed case. But because he brought that language in, I think that, and for other reasons too, at the end of this little section, I think he's really talking about pretty heavy offenses that would actually be considered in the realm of criminality, where somebody has stolen something or committed an act of violence or something like that that needs to be taken care of.

But at the same time, I think we could still, and again, this is more of a theory that he's talking about, kind of a criminal offense, but regardless, I think there's a certain degree which we can apply this to personal offenses as well.

[36 : 30] But if there's resistance to the original request for an apology, then take two or three. And then ultimately he says this, and if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church.

But if he refuses to even hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. So it's kind of a progression, right? You start privately, take a couple other people, one or two other people, and then ultimately the church.

In this case, he's talking about this is the Jewish church, if you will, which is so maybe a leader of the Jews of some kind is maybe what he's talking about in trying to put that into the church, the body of Christ context.

It could be a church leader, but I think if you have a dispute with somebody who's part of a different church, if you brought your pastor into play, do you think that might look like a conflict of interest or something like that?

So maybe there's an opportunity to bring in some kind of a trusted leader or authority or something like that who you both have respect for. I think that's the idea there anyway.

[37 : 41] So, but ultimately reconciliation is the key, or is the, excuse me, the intention. But what does he say? If he refuses to hear them, to hear even the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

And so ultimately there is no reconciliation. If you can't get that apology, if you can't get that even just humility to say I was wrong, that agreement, because a lot of times that's all we're looking for, even if they don't say the words I'm sorry, sometimes it's enough, right, just to say, yeah, you're right, I should have done that, right?

Sometimes that is just, we'll take it. But if they don't, if they won't hear you, if they won't agree, then in this case treat them like a heathen and a tax collector.

And again, this is another one why I think he's talking about criminal offenses because what is treating somebody like a heathen and a tax collector, I think it's taking them to court.

Paul talks about in the church that we shouldn't take our brother to court. He says, why would you guys do that? Because he heard some people were taking their brother to court. He said, you should try to deal with that within the church.

[38 : 58] But when things get, if they can't be dealt with in the church, God has provided magistrates and talks about that in both the Old and the New Testament to deal with these kinds of legal things.

So that's just a little bit about rebuking an offender. Again, that sounds a little harsh, but just asking for an apology. If we think about it of just asking for an apology, sometimes that's necessary.

we hope that it's not. We hope if we are doing well, if we offend somebody, we should recognize it right away and immediately repent or ask for forgiveness.

That would be the best scenario. But that doesn't always happen. Okay, so I have in here the next thing is how to give a robust apology.

How to give a robust apology. Oh yeah, so like I said, if you're the offender, if you're the one that's offended somebody, that's hurt somebody, we should be willing to humble ourselves right away, recognize what we did without anybody telling us, and humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness.

[40 : 22] Say I'm sorry. That's always better. But, does that always happen? It doesn't. It doesn't always happen. So, we need to be willing to ask for an apology sometimes.

But if somebody does ask for an apology, what does that look like? Three parts. So, if you're taking notes, write down three things.

So, the first one is be specific. What I did was wrong. What I did was wrong. Again, this is a good, robust apology.

This isn't required. We don't need to make sure that somebody, you know, did they do these things before I'm going to forgive them. But, if you're the one giving an apology, consider these three things.

What I did was wrong. I did X, Y, and Z, and that was wrong. It's a great way to start. Be specific. You know, when you say, I'm not sure what I did, but I'm sorry.

[41 : 30] That doesn't help, right? It shows a lack of acknowledging the offense. So, if we can be specific and say, this is what I did, and it was wrong, that helps so much.

So, what I did was wrong. I'm sorry. So, just communicate clearly, I'm sorry. Because, sometimes there can be a question. A lot of times, and even in Matthew 18 here, you want agreement.

You just want somebody to agree that, yes, you're right, I sinned. And, sometimes that's enough. Like, the apology is kind of, it's assumed, maybe.

But, it's always better if we make things very explicit in our communication. So, if we can explicitly say, I'm sorry, it's all the better. And, then the last one is, will you forgive me?

Ask for forgiveness. We shouldn't, even though it's good as Christians, we're taught that we always ought to be willing to forgive others.

[42 : 37] That should be part of our character, our Christian life, is our willingness to forgive. If we're on the other side, I don't think we should always assume, oh, well, you just need to forgive me.

Right? I think it's always good to ask for the forgiveness, whether it's readily given or not. It's just a good act of humility.

So, the three parts, again, what I did was wrong, be specific about it. I'm sorry. And, number three, will you forgive me? Ask for the forgiveness.

And I think that if we're the one that's offended, do we always get a robust apology from people? Not always.

It would be nice if we did. But if we don't, do we need to, like, really make sure that they hit those three points or they do this or that? I don't think so.

[43 : 39] I think we need to be willing to even accept apologies that are less than robust. Even sometimes just the slightest acknowledgement of wrong is sufficient.

Last week, somebody came up after the service and was talking about a situation with a close family member and an offense that had happened. And I can't remember how long, but there was a duration of time where there was no acknowledgement of the offense.

offense. But eventually, this person came and it was just a quick or short, you know, I was wrong or something to that effect.

And it was just like, it just made all the difference. Just a couple of words to acknowledge I'm wrong. And that makes a huge difference in the relationship and bringing about that reconciliation.

So sometimes, just those couple of words, you know, I was wrong. Or you were right. Or I shouldn't have said that or something like that is good enough. We don't need to demand that somebody grovel or do a speech or do all these big things.

[44 : 48] You know, sometimes it's good to make amends in some way. But not always. But at the same time, again, this is wisdom, using wisdom in all this.

words, I don't think that we should accept what I call a fake apology. You know what I mean by a fake apology? Well, I'm really sorry your feelings were hurt.

That's a fake apology. That's not really admitting that you did something wrong. That's saying it's kind of an under, it's like a backhanded, well, actually, you're the problem, right?

And so that's not apologizing. I'm sorry your feelings were hurt. Or, I'm sorry, but dot, dot, dot. If you hadn't have done this, is that bringing the reconciliation?

Is that taking that debt and dealing with it? Or is it just kind of putting pretty flowers on it and that kind of thing? That's what we're just dressing up a debt.

[45 : 54] We're not identifying it and dealing with it. And that's what we need to do. So we should not accept a fake apology. If somebody gives you a fake apology, let's say, no, we need to deal with this.

We need to consider this more in depth and make sure that we come to an agreement. All right, next. I'm running out of time.

Well, Pastor Marv did ask me to do one more week. You know, Pastor Marv has not been doing a great job of going on vacation. I talked to him last week and they haven't even gotten out of town, barely.

I guess they went to Indiana a couple weeks ago. So he asked for one more week so they could actually get out of town. So I'll be talking to you next week as well.

I don't know, based on the time here, maybe I'll need that for this. But let's talk about asking for an apology. This to me is harder than giving an apology.

[46 : 56] Asking for an apology. Sometimes you might think, and with the whole concept of therapeutic forgiveness, it's easy to think, well, I'm just giving an apology for myself, or I'm forgiving for myself.

And so you don't think of going to that other person. But if you don't do that, right, you are not resolving the conflict. you're not resolving or healing that relational wound.

Let's see. There was, I guess, a little bit of a story. I was talking to, I was in a conversation with some friends, and as a friend of the family, it was this lady, and I had made a remark that we should require an apology before forgiving people in a lot of cases.

And she was highly offended at that idea, because she had always been taught that, no, you just, as a Christian, what's your job is, you just have to forgive everybody, no matter what they've done, automatically without condition.

And if you're not doing that, that's not the Christian thing to do. And so we had a discussion about it, and I opened up some of these scriptures that we're talking about, Luke 17, and, you know, she was pretty upset, but she kind of calmed down, and was like, wow, I guess I've never really considered that before.

[48 : 22] So she considered it. Later on, heard a little bit about what happened after that. And she said that there was this thing that happened in her family, between her and her husband, where there was a dispute, and he would not let her do this certain thing, and it was a medical situation, and actually would not let her go to the doctor.

And it was actually a very serious thing where somebody almost died because of it. And she had decided, well, even though she was really hurt by that whole scenario, she decided, well, the Christian thing is just to forgive him, so I'm just going to let it go and forgive him.

And so they never dealt with that. They never dealt with it. And she said after we had talked, she decided, well, I'm going to go talk to him about it.

And she did, and they talked about it, and she brought it up, and he apologized. And she had been dealing, even though a lot of times we're told, right, if you forgive somebody, if you just forgive somebody without talking to them or whatever, it'll help you with your bitterness and resentment on the inside and your emotional healing and all that kind of stuff.

A lot of times that does not work. It doesn't. What really helps is reconciliation. That helps really heal those wounds that are there.

[50 : 03] And so she had an opportunity. She confronted him about it, brought it up, and they had a chance to reconcile and to have that transaction complete where there was a asking for an apology and forgiveness given and then forgiveness granted.

So we might be tempted to wait until the offender figures out what they did or wait until they grow a conscience. right? That might be the temptation.

Well, they should know that they offended me, right? That might be a temptation. They should know that what they said was rude or mean or demeaning or whatever. But we don't want those things to pile up.

And so even though we would hope that people would recognize those things, we need to be willing to go to them and let them know that they've offended us. And so here's some steps we can take in asking for an apology.

Hey, here's what you did to hurt me. Step one, here's what you did to hurt me. Explain it. This one is important too. Hey, I really want to forgive you.

[51 : 13] We need to have a willingness to always forgive and we can communicate that clearly. I really want us to reconcile. I want to be able to forgive you and for us to be reconciled.

Make that clear in our communication. And then number three, but I really need an apology. which you did hurt me. I really want to forgive you, but I need an apology.

And we can ask for it. Would you apologize? Some people, as soon as you bring it up, you don't even have to get to step two. They'll figure it out and that would be great.

But some of us are knuckleheads. And so sometimes the explicit ask for an apology is required. So again, we don't need to ask somebody to grovel or beg.

This is not intended to punish somebody in asking for an apology. It's just trying to take those steps that are needed to make the reconciliation. Well, I've got a lot more notes to talk about.

[52 : 18] And we didn't even get to any of the questions. So tell you what, I've got an idea. Even though we're a little bit over time, I'm going to see if there's any comments or questions.

So we'll get the mic ready. We'll do like five minutes. based on anything over the last couple of weeks. And then next week, since I've got another week, we'll go ahead and finish this up.

And we'll go through more of the questions that I got on paper. So I know I didn't give people any time. I know it's hard.

I've been out here and Pastor Marr will say, well, does anybody have any questions? And he's thinking, well, I'm sure I do. And then he says, okay, well, no questions. Well, I'm going to preach five more minutes then.

So I didn't give you any heads up. I guess I did earlier, didn't I? I mentioned finally I was away. But if anybody has any comments or questions.

[53 : 22] In chapter 18, in verse 18, you've been skirting around that. It talks, well, read it. It's about losing in heaven, what you loosed on earth and binding in heaven, what you bind on earth.

That has really always gotten me because the Catholic Church, which I came from, that's where they get confessions out of. But what you're talking about, it's more forgiveness, but yet it's, they're binding on earth and binding it in heaven.

What does that mean? We're talking forgiveness. Yeah. You know, Ed, I had specifically asked for easy questions earlier. And you just did not listen.

So, you know, it is difficult and I don't know that I have a hard and fast idea, but he gave, Christ gave his apostles authority.

And I think, is it here or somewhere else, he talks about giving Peter the keys to the kingdom. And he talks about if you bind something, then it will be considered bound in heaven.

[55 : 02] I think I'm getting that right. If you loose something, it will consider it loosed in heaven. He gave the apostles this certain level of authority to bind things to loose things.

And my thinking is that that's something similar here. That he's giving them a certain level of authority to, hey, listen, if there's somebody that you see that they are rejecting the law or a rift in human relations or whatever it might be, I'm going to respect that.

I'm going to side with you on it because I trust you. Oh, it is right here, isn't it? Surely I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth, let's see, did I miss the oh, I guess that's specifically what you're talking about, sorry.

But anyway, I think he was giving a certain level of authority and saying that if you agree to something, if you say so because I give you this authority, I'm going to back you.

[56 : 28] So, that's my best shot at it. One more, Scott? Okay, I just came, remember the verse, Jesus prayed, Father forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.

Yeah, so I had made, and this is in regard to whether we should have conditions for forgiveness, I think, right? Scott, is that kind of what we're thinking? And there are a couple of places, and that's one, and maybe this is good to maybe bring up next week, is there's that time, I think there's the three that I can think of, Acts 10, or 9 and 10, who was stoned?

Stephen did the same thing, right? He said, Father, forgive them. There's also the woman who committed adultery, caught in the act of adultery, where Jesus said, neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.

There was no repentance or apology or anything like there. But, so in that case, I don't think Jesus was, well, he doesn't say that he forgave them, right?

So he's asking, it's a prayer to the Father. And even though you can obviously tell in that prayer, the heart of forgiveness, the heart of mercy that he had, he wasn't actually saying, Father, I forgive them, or something like that.

[57 : 54] But he was asking the Father, forgive them. And he said something specific, it's for something that they don't know what they're doing. And so I imagine, what are they doing that they don't know of?

Do they not know that they're crucifying an innocent man? Well, actually, they pretty much did, right? They knew that he was innocent.

He was declared innocent. He was crucified anyway. But I think what they didn't know what they were doing was they were crucifying the God of all creation.

And boy, what kind of a sin is that? And so he was asking the Lord for mercy. Don't hold that specific thing to their account. Because, you know, I think it's clear that if these people that were part of the crucifixion, whether it was the Jews or the Greeks or the Romans, who were part of this, if they never asked God for forgiveness of their sins, if they never repented and turned to Christ or to the Lord in some way, then God still will judge them for all their sins, not just that one, but for all their sins.

That's what the Bible teaches. And so, but God did not want them, or Jesus did not want the Father to hold them to account for that specific thing.

[59 : 14] That's my theory anyway. I know that's a, that might be a little controversial, but, well, we're way over time. Was there any, just, somebody just had to ask a question or make a comment before we finish?

God bless you. All right. All right. All right. Well, thanks, everybody. Let's close in prayer, and I guess maybe we'll pick this up next week. Father, forgiveness, human relationships are hard.

Relationships, just in general, can be so difficult sometimes, and we're so grateful to you for the, for the, for what you've done to portray forgiveness to us, to grant forgiveness to us, to, that you would be so gracious and so merciful that you would offer even your own son to die for our sins, that we might be forgiven of all of our sins, and be an example through that of how we might deal with others here in this short life that we have on earth.

I ask that you would continue to work in each one of us. If, you know, a lot of times in messages like these, Father, we have things that come to mind, specific things that come to mind, that we would be ones who would be ready and willing to see the urgency of bringing the reconciliation where it's needed and pursuing that reconciliation and doing it in a biblical way.

Thank you for your word and for the opportunity to share it today. In Jesus' name, amen. All right. You're dismissed.