

FORGIVING LIKE JESUS

Those who desire to be Jesus's disciples must endeavor to learn Jesus's teachings and ways and imitate Him by walking as He walked (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Corinthians 11:1). One aspect of Jesus's life that must be imitated is the way Jesus forgave. Therefore, we must consider the Scriptures that give us insight into the way Jesus forgave people of the wrongs they had committed against Him and His Father so we can learn how to walk in His footsteps in the way that we forgive.

MARK 2:1-12

This paralyzed man and those who carried him demonstrated faith in Jesus that would not be deterred, even digging through the roof to get to Jesus through the crowd. When the man finally got in front of Jesus, Jesus healed him both physically and spiritually. His power to physically heal the man demonstrated that Jesus had the authority to forgive sin! In this, Jesus demonstrated His desire to forgive people of their sin (rebellion against God). The Greek word used carries the idea of letting something go (like a debt). While we do not know the nature of this man's sins, Jesus (in conjunction with the action of the man's faith) demonstrated His desire to release the man of all His spiritual debt against God, as well as His authority to do so! Therefore, Jesus did not force repayment of this debt (which the man could never repay, Romans 6:23), but released it and gave him the opportunity for a new relationship with God!

LUKE 7:36-50

As Simon (a Pharisee) criticized the sinful woman who washed Jesus's feet with her tears and hair and anointed them with costly perfume, Jesus saw her faith through her sacrificial devotion to Him and forgave her! Notice that Simon recognized the woman as being a sinful woman. Perhaps she was a woman with an ungodly reputation. Jesus, though, knew exactly who she was and what she had done – and was willing to forgive her anyway! In fact, Jesus taught a parable about someone who was released from a small debt versus a large debt in response to the situation,

implying the woman saw herself as having a large spiritual debt of sin. Yet, neither the nature nor the severity of her sinfulness stopped Jesus from willingly releasing her from all her debt of sin! So, those who follow Jesus must also rejoice in Jesus's willingness to forgive both themselves and others and extend such forgiveness to others!

LUKE 23:32-34

Crucifixion was one of the worst forms of capital punishment, and Jesus was now experiencing it – for crimes He did not commit. There were several who were guilty for the roles they played in putting Jesus on the cross. This included the Jewish leaders (Luke 22:1-2, 66-71; 23:1-5), Judas (Luke 22:3-6, 47-53), the Jewish people (Luke 23:13-25), Governor Pilate (Luke 23:20-25), and the Roman soldiers (Luke 23:32-37). Yet, as Jesus was writhing in pain on the cross, He prayed to the Father that those who were responsible for that great act of rebellion against God and rejection of Him as the Messiah would be forgiven! The Father would answer this prayer whenever those who crucified Jesus would be given the opportunity to hear and obey the gospel, being granted the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2)! Certainly, if Jesus was willing to forgive those who were actively involved in falsely accusing and putting Him to death on the cross (though He had done no wrong), His followers (who have done wrong) ought to be willing to forgive those who do wrong against them!

LUKE 23:39-43

Early in Jesus's crucifixion, it appears as though both criminals who were being crucified next to Jesus joined in mocking Jesus (Matthew 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32). However, one of these criminals had a change of heart that is demonstrated in this text (perhaps through watching how Jesus responded to what was happening and what He said, e.g. Luke 23:34). This man now rebuked the mocking thief, acknowledged his own guilt, declared Jesus's innocence, recognized Jesus as King, and asked Jesus to remember Him. Jesus's response to the man clearly indicates he would be saved and, therefore, forgiven of his sin (including for whatever put him on the cross and for mocking Jesus)! Due to this forgiveness, this man could now anticipate a future in Paradise rather than torment (Luke 16:19-31)!

JOHN 21:15-19

Despite the apostle Peter's assertion that he would never deny Jesus (Matthew 26:31-35), Peter did exactly that after Jesus was arrested (Matthew 26:69-75). In fact, Jesus looked at Peter after Peter denied Jesus for the third time, and Peter wept bitterly (Luke 22:60-62). Despite this abandonment and denial by one of those who had been a close and zealous follower, Jesus was willing to forgive Peter. Peter repented of his sin (as implied in this text reaffirming his love for Jesus), and Jesus once again invited Peter to follow Him and would use him to feed and shepherd others (Acts 1-12; 1 Peter 5:1). Therefore, those who follow Jesus today must be willing to forgive the past betrayals of trust others have committed and give those who repent a fresh opportunity (Luke 17:3-4)!

MATTHEW 26:26-29

Before Jesus was crucified, He instituted the Lord's Supper that would offer His disciples a way to remember His sacrifice and what it accomplishes. Namely, Jesus mentioned the fact that His blood that would be poured out was for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, Jesus did not just extend forgiveness to the people who encountered Him during His lifetime. Rather, Jesus offers forgiveness (the release of spiritual debt against God) to every person, no matter who they are or how they have rebelled against God! In fact, offering this opportunity for forgiveness of sin was the reason Jesus had come (John 1:29; Hebrews 8:12)! Consequently, if Jesus can forgive the most terrible and devastating forms of sin against God when people repent as if they never happened, certainly His disciples are also expected to forgive those who sin against them and repent (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Colossians 3:12-15)!

CONCLUSION

Imitating Jesus requires that you forgive like Jesus forgave. Although there is much more that could be discussed, we have seen Jesus's desire and authority to forgive. Ultimately, Jesus even wanted those who personally abandoned and crucified Him to be forgiven, and gave His life on the cross so that everyone could be forgiven of sin. Therefore, disciples of Jesus must be willing to forgive anyone who sins against and harms them!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to forgive?

How did Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to the paralyzed man?

How did Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to the woman who anointed His feet?

How did Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to those responsible for putting Him to death?

How did Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to the repentant thief on the cross?

How did Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to Peter?

How does Jesus demonstrate forgiveness to all who come to Him?

What does Jesus's example teach you about forgiving others?

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