

Relationally Committed

The Expectation to Forgive.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors – Matthew 6:12

“I forgive but I won’t forget” was the actual verbiage of one upset person to the other standing in front of them. This came on the heels of an attempt to resolve some awkward differences. The problem was a feeling of disrespect which was discovered as the expectation to do exactly what the other dictated. The veiled statement of forgiveness was couched in such a manner as to control the other.

God requires His children to forgive. The basis of forgiveness never starts with us, it begins with God. Matthew 6:12 is taken from the Lord’s Prayer where Jesus taught His men to ask the Father to forgive them, as they forgave others. God demonstrated the nature of forgiveness by forgiving those who would repent and believe in the gospel. His forgiveness releases broken and fallen human beings from the guilt of their sin and from the penalty of the transgression.

The forgiveness addressed in the Lord’s Prayer in verse twelve is not for salvation, but it is grounded in redemptive language since Jesus taught them to address God as Father. Their relationship with their heavenly Father was secure. The nature of this forgiveness is related to fellowship with other believers and with God. God’s requirement: since He forgave them, they are required to forgive others.

Forgiveness is releasing a person or people from the guilt of sin or wrongdoing. If a person is innocent, there is nothing to forgive. In a court of law, the charges would be dropped if it was determined the person was innocent of those charges. Forgiveness protects the victim from being consumed by the bitterness of being betrayed. Forgiveness also protects the offender from the victim executing his or her own version of justice.

But forgiveness never is about letting a person “get away with bad behavior.” If we are going to be relationally committed to one another, it will require us to learn to forgive. There is no way to keep the unity of the Spirit in our marriage, our families or in the community of faith without the willingness to forgive.

Relational commitment is not just about love and kindness. It is dealing with wrongdoing and sin by learning to forgive. We can never say we are relationally committed if we refuse to forgive others when they sin. Forgiveness provides freedom. Unforgiveness will enslave us.

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