

THE MAIN THING: Forgiveness breaks the cycle of hatred and helps us resist temptation.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. What is the biggest item you have ever bought (besides your home)?
Did it end up being a good purchase? Why? Why not?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. 'Peirazó' is the Greek word used for 'temptation' in Matthew 6:13. It is also used in James 1:2, 3, 13 with the meaning of 'trial or test'.
After reading the verses, decide how you would explain to someone who asks you, 'Why do I need to ask God not to lead me into temptation?'
2. Read Matthew 18:21-35.
 - a. How would you describe the King in the parable? Why?
 - b. How would you describe the servant who owed the huge debt? Why?
 - c. How would you describe the servant who owed the small debt? Why?
3. What were the reasons the 'forgiven' servant did not forgive the small debt of the other servant? What does this tell us about him?
4. What are the issues in our relationships that build up debts of unforgiveness in the natural world? (see Colossians 3:5-10 for some examples)
What does Hebrews 10:14 say about the forgiveness that believers have in Christ?

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling*

1. "To forgive someone does not mean to excuse them from wrong-doing; it does not mean allowing abusive or dishonest or just plain unacceptable behavior to go on and not confront it, or to let the person in question escape the legal consequences of their actions. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciling with someone . . . 'if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.' (Romans 13:18)"
How do Pastor Henry's comments expand your understanding of 'forgiveness'?
2. Is there someone you have put into your own 'prison of unforgiveness'?
At what stage are you in your processing forgiveness of others?
How can the group pray with you as you offer them release?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 18:21-35

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"
²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."
²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^[a] was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.
²⁶"At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.
²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[a] He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' ³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.
³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.' ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Colossians 3:5-10

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.^[a] ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

James 1:2, 3, 13

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. . . ¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone. . .

Sermon Study Summary

'Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.' (Matthew 6:13)

There is a part of temptation that is captivating and thrilling for us, despite the negative consequences. But does God lead us into temptation?

The Greek word for temptation – *peirazó* - can mean to test or subject to a trial. God does not tempt us, or entice us to sin; although, God does use trials to test our character and faith. The evil one uses temptation to separate us from God and thereby fracture our relationship with him, while God uses the trials of temptation to teach us perseverance. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we are asking God to keep us away from temptation, and, if we slip towards sin, to give us the strength to resist the devil.

'Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.' (Matthew 6:11)

Through Christ's death on the cross, we are told that all of our sins – past, present, and future – have been paid for by his blood. But why does Christ teach us to ask for forgiveness of our sins if God has already cancelled out our transgressions?

Because there are two realms – the earthly and heavenly, also known as the spiritual realm. God takes the sin on your account and places it on Christ's account, and vice versa, Christ's righteousness is taken from his account and placed in your account. While we cannot live perfectly in this life, the righteousness of Christ perfects us in the spiritual realm. When we ask for forgiveness, we are admitting to God that we have sinned and are repentant of our actions. Our desire is then to change our behaviour here on earth to reflect our spiritual standing with God in heaven.

The first key to a long lasting relationship is forgiveness. There is no limit to forgiveness. We may think that a relationship that has been damaged cannot be repaired and, therefore, should be abandoned. But Christ tells us that this does not have to happen. A relationship can heal, and be stronger than before if forgiveness is present in the relationship.

The second key to forgiving others is to realize how much you have been forgiven. Our capacity to forgive begins when we acknowledge the immensity of debt which we owe; a debt so great we cannot repay it. Yet by God's grace, through Christ's death on the cross, this debt has been cancelled on our behalf. The immensity of forgiveness we have received should humble us and have us reflect on the grace shown to us.

The third key to forgiveness is the willingness in which we forgive others. The servant in the parable acts in contrary to the forgiveness shown to him by his master: the master desired his servant to be merciful because mercy was shown to the servant, and yet the servant treated one indebted to him callously and without mercy. As a result, the master threw the servant in jail until he could repay his debt – forgive and you will be forgiven.

It may initially feel good to hold grudges, to shun when we are wronged, yet we are told to ask forgiveness. We cannot earn our forgiveness. Therefore, the test that Christ is truly in us will be revealed through our willingness to forgive those whom have wronged us. Forgiveness does not mean we ought to tolerate wrongdoing or to be complacent with ill deeds. Forgiveness means giving up the right to hurt someone back. It may take a long time to forgive them, but if you do not forgive those whom have wronged you, you place them within a prison of hate and bitterness. And if you still withhold forgiveness, you will eventually chain yourself to that same prison you placed your enemies in. This is why Christ's teachings on forgiveness are crucial – we are to use our freedom in Christ to free others from the bondage of hate and strife through forgiveness.

As C.S. Lewis once said, "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." Forgiveness is a part of our Christian identity.