

Myth number Three: Forgiving Means Forgetting

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

The myths about forgiveness:

Pretending nothing happened or head in the sand.

A never ending series of second chances.

Fresh start with all the consequences and old baggage removed.

Full restoration of a broken relationship, complete with the same level of trust and privileges that preceded the wrongdoing.

The Biggest Myth of Forgiveness:

Genuine forgiveness means literally forgetting what happened

It means wiping the slate so clean that every memory of the transgression disappears. Somehow God will be confused if we bring up a past sin because He does not remember it. There are some passages that might lead us to believe this. You will hear this kind of proofing as Proof Texting – which means you take a text out of context to prove a point you wish to make.

Hebrews 8:12

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Psalms 103:11-12

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

When the Bible says that God remembers something what it means is that God renews his work in that area. As with Noah who have floated around for nearly 5 months and, "God remembered him." It wasn't as though God had amnesia and Gabriel had to remind him that there was somebody floating on the water but rather that God was prepared to continue his work with Noah.

From Adams sin to David's adultery and Peter's denial we have many ugly sins which we believe to be both widely known and fully forgiven. But if God literally has no memory of these events then we have a small problem. We are aware of things God does not remember. However, when the Bible says that God does not remember our sin it is saying that he no longer responds to us in light of those sins.

Here is the problems created by this proof texting.

When forgiving becomes synonymous with forgetting we have some of the following spiritual problems.

1. Anger at God -- when getting right with God doesn't make everything right with life it's easy to become disillusioned and angry with God. The alcoholic who can not win his kids back with the former porn addict who can never regain his wife's trust again. They become angry assuming that forgiving means forgetting and so why hasn't God fixed everything they have broken?

2. Unreasonable expectations that unfairly turns the tables on the one wronged. -- assuming that once forgiven whatever happened in the past should not be a dead issue and everyone should just move on. This unfairly turns the tables on the one who has been wrong. It assumes their pain should magically disappear. My sin is now their problem.

However, forgiveness is a decision that is lived out and those who cannot remember what happened to them are likely to become emotionally handicapped.

3. **Giving up on forgiving** is equated with forgetting it is easy to just give up. Sure we should forget the little things like the social slights, the unkind word, the hidden gems our parking space. But when it comes to the truth hurts and injustices of life, most of us are keenly aware of the self-induced spiritual amnesia isn't in the cards. Painful memory stick and they can't be willed away. Over time the pain lessened and memories may say.

The two realms of forgiveness

When it comes to forgiveness there are two realms: **THE SPIRITUAL/ETERNAL ARENA AND THE EARTHLY/TEMPORAL arena.**

In the spiritual/eternal forgiveness wipes the slate clean. God treats us as if it never happened. However on the earthly/temporal God's forgiveness rarely removes the consequences or restores all that we've broken. God's forgiveness does however offer a second chance.

I mentioned David and Bathsheba and the consequences of their sin in the previous sermon. David was informed the sword would never depart from his house -- that his own son would one day dishonoring them in public as he had dishonored that she does husband in private -- he would not be allowed to build the temple -- and the son conceived on his night of passion would die a few days after birth. God is not asking us to pretend that nothing has happened or to set aside all the earthly and legal consequences of a crime. We are permitted to pursue justice.

It is good to remember that God did not summarily doom David to a life of hopeless regret. Even though his past on which he was heading was lost forever there was still a plan B. When David returned to obedience he was returned to the highest levels of usefulness. Even while he lived through the consequences that were ongoing in this life of highest usefulness. God to David's best poetry and reflections which had been written after the fiasco with bedsheets and published them in his holy book which he then quoted as Jesus. Being forgiven is not a get out of jail free card but a genuine chance to become something different.

So which consequences are appropriate and which are punitive?

Matthew 18 records Jesus response to Peter's question how can we forgive 70x7?

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he 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 talents£ 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"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 denarii. 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 you back.' 30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed 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. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned 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 from your heart."

Stop keeping score & Get a good mirror

Matthew 18:21-35

When Jesus spoke of forgiving 70 times (or 7x70) he wasn't suggesting a tally sheet but a way to keep us forgiving. Isn't it true that we have the ability to undercount our own misdeeds while multiplying the wrongdoing of others. When someone cuts us off a simple hunk of the horn or menacing gesture satisfies us that they got the message. But if we are the offending party we tend to view the near accident is no harm no foul an hour or and or gesture as a personal affront. Leaving us one down on the scorecard so there is still getting exchange of words etc.

Get a good mirror

Matthew 18:35

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Biblical forgiveness starts with a look in the mirror not by looking at the wrong that was done. Always begin with asking, "what have I done and how I've been forgiven?" Then offer the same kind of forgiveness to others.

Rebuke when wronged – Forgive when asked

Luke 17:3-4

So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Revenge is an option

Romans 12:17-21

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. *On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."* Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Once forgiving twice shy

Trust, close relationships, and forgiveness are not necessarily related. While forgiveness puts aside all bitterness and all plans for revenge, it doesn't make someone trustworthy or turn the person back into our best friend. Trust has to be earned.

If you are having trouble forgiving pray and **remember that when we offer forgiveness to those who have no excuse -- and for things most of the world would consider unforgivable -- we become most like Jesus.**

What if I don't want to give forgiveness?

Begin by giving God permission to change the way you feel and to make you want to forgive. This forces us to face the hardness of our own hearts. Take a moment to walk through your life and remember all of the things that you have done which you need forgiveness. It is hard to have righteous anger when you realize how unrighteous many of your actions have been.

- **Give God permission to change how you feel.**
- **Take a Forgiveness Walk**

MY NEXT STEP TODAY IS TO...

Memorize Colossians 3:13.

Accept forgiveness from Jesus Christ for the first time.

Accept the consequences of my sins while accepting forgiveness from:

_____.

Give God permission to change my unforgiving heart toward:

_____.