

THE POWER OF FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER: Matthew 18:21-35

World's Strongest Man Contest:

- § Farmer's walk - where contestants grab an object weighing 300 pounds and walk with it until they can walk no more.
- § "Crucifix" event where you have to hold 27.5-pound weights at shoulder width with elbows locked for as long as you can.
- § Tire flip, turning a half-ton tire five times in the quickest time.
- § Log Lift - where the contestants have to take huge logs laying on the ground and lift them above their heads as many times as possible.
- § There's even the small matter of hauling a boat up a steep incline or dragging a plane or truck along a path.
- § These feats are typically associated with someone born on the planet Krypton.

Do you know what they get from all of this? It is not a lot of money. It is bragging rites! It is a title. These men get the title of "World's Strongest Man" and they do it by carrying huge amounts of weight.

I believe some of us can be contenders in this contest without even realizing it!

Some people carry around a huge amount of weight (and I am not talking about around their belly)! They let their burdens in life add up and it weighs them down!

Think about it: Doesn't someone owe you something? An apology? A second chance? A fresh start? An explanation? A thank-you? A childhood? A marriage? If you were to stop and think about it, you could probably make a list of a lot of folks who have added to your burdens. Your parents should have been more protective. Your children should have been more appreciative. Your spouse should be more sensitive. Your preacher should have been more attentive.

People in your past have dipped their hands into your purse and taken what was yours. What are you going to do?

Few questions are more important. Dealing with the burden or debt others have added to your life is at the heart of your happiness.

Jesus said, "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also for-give you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14–15 niv).

When saying this, Jesus does not question the reality of your wounds. He does not doubt that you have been sinned against, that the weight some have caused is enormous! The issue is not the existence of pain; the issue is the treatment of pain. What are you going to do with your pain, your debts, your burdens, your

unforgiveness? These burdens pile up like charges on a credit card and before too long, they can crush you!

There is good news today! Turn with me in to Matthew 18:23

I. GOD WANTS TO FORGIVE YOU

- a. Story in Matthew 18 – read verses 23-27
 - i. Realize the debt that was owed:
 1. A talent is the value of 6000 denarii.
 2. A denarii is the equivalent of a day's wage for a common laborer.
 3. Today's minimum wage is \$5.45 and will become \$6 in January
 4. Person working will make \$48/day in January
 5. A talent in January would be worth: \$288,000
 6. That means this servant owed around \$ 2,880,000,000
- b. I want you to know the kind of forgiveness that God wants to bring in your life!
 - i. **FORGIVENESS = RELEASE + RELATIONSHIP**
 - ii. **RELEASE** means that you will say, "I've been wronged, you have hurt me, but I give up the right to hurt you back. Though I have that right, and you deserve it, I give up that right and take the pain upon myself." God releases you from the punishment you deserve from sin!
 - iii. **RELATIONSHIP** means that you don't leave it there. You don't just release the person, but you go and restore the relationship. You say to the person, that I will work at a relationship with you. God does the same. He releases us and then begins to walk with us. He helps us in our relationship with Him by being there for us.
 - iv. That is what forgiveness is:
FORGIVENESS = RELEASE + RELATIONSHIP
 - v. Note: there is a difference between forgiveness and trusting a person.
- c. When people stop forgiving, they stop caring. People find all kinds of ways to deal with pain. They can give people the silent treatment, become distant, start nagging, start stereotyping (all men are jerks, every preacher is a fake, you can't trust women, all politicians are crooks), and they allow this hurt to brew. Hurt becomes Hate, and hate becomes a cancer!
 1. People in a cancer center

- d. How many of you have the following sitting in your closet? A basic jacket, a tailored dress, fitted pants, a classic shirt, A flattering skirt, a colorful scarf, comfortable shoes. In fact maybe three types of shoes: your gym shoes, your everyday shoes, and your dress shoes. See here is the problem, if you are like me, often we worry more about what we look like on the outside, than how we look in the inside. Forgiveness brings the necessary clothes for the inside of you!
- e. Listen to the types of clothes your inside needs. Forgiveness brings each one:
- i. **TENDER MERCIES** - Mercy is a gift from God so that we will feel genuine empathy and compassion for others. Christians are to take off anger and wrath and to put on mercy and compassion. Matthew 5:7 - *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* Forgiveness brings the mercy that show that we are blessed by God!
 - ii. **KINDNESS** - Kindness is " love expressed in actions." A believer must take off malice before putting on kindness. In 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 Paul encouraged believers to put on kindness to imitate Christ. To be like Christ a believer must be clothed in kindness. You can not be kind, unless you have decided to forgive.
 - iii. **HUMILITY** - To forgive takes you knowing that God is in control. When God is in control, you don't have take revenge. You know that He will for you, OR that He will do what is best in the situation you are in. Though the world doesn't promote humility, believers are to be dressed in humility so that God alone is honored.
 - iv. **PATIENCE** – Another essential garment of the Christian's spiritual wardrobe is patience, or as the King James Version puts it: longsuffering. Patience long-suffering, because it requires forgiveness that might be painful, but a forgiveness that is ongoing. As Christians put on longsuffering, they can be patient with God, patient with self and patient with others.
 - v. **FREEDOM**
 1. Holding an offense against someone is like being a jailer, while the offending party is in the jail. You're keeping them in there but good. You alone have the key to let them out, but you just won't, because of what they did to you. The problem is, since you're the jailer, you're stuck there too. Oh, the person might be behind the bars, but you can't go anywhere either. The only way to set yourself free is by letting them go, too.

2. Galatians 5:1 - *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

“Though the pain is deep”—I forgive.

“Though you may do this again”—I forgive.

“Though I have cried a million tears”—I forgive.

“Though the world says, “you have every right to hate”—I forgive. Because my right to hate has not been given to me by my Lord. For he tells me that there is more freedom in forgiveness than there is in hate.

vi. CLOSURE

1. We seem to think that if we have forgiven, then we will forget. That’s not true. We are humans with memories. Forgetting is not a substitute for forgiveness. In fact, on the road to forgiveness, we may have to remember all the horrible things that happened to us.
2. Forgiveness does not mean Forgetting - Remember that when God forgives us we still suffer the consequences for those sins. That same principle applies to our relationships with each other. Let me explain. Forgiving someone's wrong does not mean that you can't challenge them to do what is right or that you automatically should begin to trust them to do what is right. Forgiving someone for lying does not mean you have to start believing everything they say. Even though you have forgiven them, it will take them some time to rebuild your trust. That’s the consequence of their sin. Forgiveness is immediate, trust must be rebuilt little by little. Let me be very clear about this: forgiving someone does not mean that you have to pretend that the sin they committed against you never happened. That would be foolish, and in cases such as physical abuse it could even be life threatening. Forgiveness means that you let go of your feelings of anger and retribution and hatred. It does not mean that you have to allow another person to continually hurt you in the same ways.
3. But forgiveness closes the door on the pain. It says: I will not let the emotional baggage keep me down. And if I do remember, I will choose to forgive again.
4. At a convention with their wives, 2 businessmen who had been roommates in college crossed paths. They sat in the lobby all night talking. They know they would be in trouble with their

wives. The next day they happened to see each other. One asked: What did your wife say?

Well, I walked in the door and my wife got historical.

Don't you mean hysterical?

No, historical. She told me everything I ever did wrong!

5. Satan would love to be like that nagging wife and keep reminding you of everything you did wrong. Forgiveness shuts this down!
6. Forgiveness is a choice, and you can choose to keep the emotion behind locked doors. You can walk away from it. Is it easy? No. Is it possible? Yes. Ask Him to help you. You already have all the Spirit you need. But ask for the courage to forgive. Ask for the freedom that comes. Ask God to show you how to move on.

God wants to forgive you and bring these things in your life, but there is also an response that He is expecting. You see, when God forgives you, He then wants you to forgive.

II. GOD WANTS YOU TO FORGIVE

a. Servant's response in Matthew 18 – read verse 28-35

- i. 100 denarii = \$4,800
- ii. Key verse = vs. 35

b. God wants you to forgive! That hit me – share story about forgiving Dad.

c. Our forgiveness is based on God's forgiveness

- i. If you could be super good and only sin three times a day, how many sins would you commit in a lifetime? That's 1,095 sins a year. Let's say you live to be 80 years old, so that's 70 years of sins against you (because the first ten years didn't count because you hadn't reached an age of accountability yet). That would be roughly 70,000 sins in a lifetime! We must remember that God has perfect memory! He sees the past, present and future. When you stand before a God who can remember like that, and a God who is holy and perfect, I don't think God is going to be happy.
- ii. God is not going to be happy UNLESS you have allowed Christ to pay you billion-dollar debt of sin! Seven times in the Bible it says that God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; modified in 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:31; Ps 111:4; 112:4). God's forgiveness is huge and lavish. Its magnitude is great. It is

“abounding,” not half hearted. God does not simply forgive sin-God removed it! He removes it “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:12). By doing so He shows us that His love is as large “as the heavens are high above the earth” (Ps 103:11).

- d. We can forgive, because God has forgiven a huge debt on our part through Jesus Christ! We can forgive because of Jesus!
 - i. Ephesians 4:32 - *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
 - ii. Colossians 3:13 - *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*
 - iii. How do we accept this gift of forgiveness in Christ? FAITH
 - 1. Faith, which includes:
 - a. Believing
 - b. Confession
 - c. Repentance
 - d. Baptism
 - e. walking in Him
- e. Reread Verse 35
 - i. Who do you need to forgive?

At the end of life, there is reward or title for someone who has held on to the most bitterness or pain. In heaven, there is no World’s Strongest Man or Woman contest where the reward goes to the person who carried around the most baggage in this life. In fact, the opposite is true. The rewards in heaven go to the person who is able to give up the most baggage, to the person who lives the life of forgiveness.

Someone here today may be suffering under huge weight. Will you let Jesus take it off?

Matthew 11:29-30 - *Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.*