

Learning to Forgive Like God

But Thou art a God of forgiveness...
Nehemiah 9:17

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “forgiveness”?

BEING A HEARER OF THE WORD

The Description of God’s Forgiveness

2. How is the Heavenly Father described in the following verses?

Nehemiah 9:17

Psalms 78:38

Psalms 103:8

Micah 7:18

3. How does Scripture describe the person who has been forgiven?

Psalms 65:3-4

Romans 4:7-8

“Throughout the Bible, forgiveness carries the idea of ‘release,’ ‘sending away,’ or ‘letting go.’ The Greek word often translated ‘forgiveness’ was used to indicate release from an office, marriage, obligation, debt, or punishment. The idea of a debt or something owed is inherent to the concept of forgiveness. In biblical terms, therefore, forgiveness is the *loving, voluntary cancellation of a debt.*”¹

4. Where is forgiveness found, and upon what is it based?

Matthew 26:28

Ephesians 1:7

Colossians 2:13-14

Hebrews 9:22-28

5. How does this relate to the definition of forgiveness given earlier?

6. What is the goal of God’s forgiveness?

2 Corinthians 5:19-20

The Demonstration of God's Forgiveness

7. What has God done with our sins?

Psalm 85:2

Psalm 103:12

Isaiah 38:17

Isaiah 43:25

Isaiah 44:22

We often hear the phrase, "forgive and forget." When the Bible says that God remembers our sins no more, it does not mean He erases His memory, but that He no longer holds our sin against us. See Psalm 79:8.

"God is not seen as loving because He chooses to forget forgiven sin,
but because He chooses not to hold it against us."²

When a person repents of his sin and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, his slate is wiped clean by God's forgiveness. This results in an eternal relationship with the Heavenly Father that cannot be taken away. However, when a believer sins, fellowship with God is broken.

8. When a Christians sins, what is he to do?

1 John 1:9

“Confess” means, “to say the same thing.” It means to agree with God that what I have thought, said, or done is *sin*. It means much more than saying, “I am sorry.” It means saying, “I was wrong, I am guilty.”

9. Psalm 51 is an illustration of confession and divine forgiveness. King David wrote this after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his sin with Bathsheba. Read the psalm and answer the following questions.

List the essential ingredients in his confession. (v. 1-6)

How is God’s forgiveness described? (v. 7-9)

What were the results of his confession? (v. 10-12)

The Dependability of God’s Forgiveness

10. How complete is our Heavenly Father’s forgiveness?

Isaiah 1:18

Hebrews 8:12

1 John 1:9

11. If you truly confess your sin to God, can you ever be sure that He has really forgiven you? Why?

Titus 1:2

*My sin - O the bliss of this glorious thought,
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.³*

BEING A DOER OF THE WORD

12. Read Matthew 18:21-35. In His teaching on forgiveness, Jesus told a parable concerning the indebtedness of two slaves.

What was the condition of the first slave? (v. 23-27)

What was the condition of the second slave? (v. 28-30)

What was the expected behavior of the first slave? (v. 33)

How does God describe the slave who refused to forgive? (v. 32)

See also Matthew 6:14-15. What are the consequences we must face if we behave like the first slave?

“He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.”⁴

13. As forgiven sinners, how does our Father want us to respond to others?

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:12-13

Write one specific truth about God’s forgiveness that you learned from this study and how it will make a difference in your life.

Is there any person you have not truly forgiven? What does God want you to do about it? Will you forgive as God has commanded?

Notes:

1. Tim Jackson, *When Forgiveness Seems Impossible* (Grand Rapids, Radio Bible Class, no date), p. 3.
 2. Ibid., p. 23.
 3. Horatio G. Spafford, "It Is Well With My Soul," verse 3.
 4. George Herbert, cited by George Sweeting, *Great Quotes & Illustrations* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1985), p. 116.
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