

We are looking at areas of growth and maturity for a Jesus Follower.

Today, look at this piece of the puzzle:

A growing and maturing commitment to walk in forgiveness

Christianity revolves around forgiveness. God did the most extreme thing so that He could forgive rebellious mankind—He sent His own son to be framed, tortured and murdered. Forgiveness cost God everything. He has set the pace for us in forgiveness. He demonstrated that forgiveness is not about emotion, convenience or the offending party's humility or repentance. He has shown us that forgiveness is an act of the will that may be disregarded by those we seek to forgive. He expects us to also forgive. Forgiveness is not an option for those who have been forgiven by Christ. Biblical discipleship helps us realize the sobriety of forgiveness and our mandate from God to walk in forgiveness. It helps us experience the freedom of taking people off our hooks and putting them on God's hook.

God takes forgiveness very seriously. To forgive us Jesus gave His life, even while we were His enemies. (Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!) God expects us to forgive others.

Matthew 6:12;14-15 *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

When we compare how much God has forgiven us, compared to what we need to forgive others for, it is way out of proportion. God has forgiven us for a lifetime of sin; if translated into money it would be millions of dollars (maybe more). We need to forgive as deeply.

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?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since 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. "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. "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. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'" "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man*

thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

When we choose not to forgive others, we are creating a barrier between God and ourselves.

Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

The biblical principle of the law of the harvest (Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows) applies to this area of forgiveness. When we choose not to forgive, we are hurting ourselves not just those we think we are hurting by not forgiving them.

Luke 6:37 *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*

Sometimes people are hurt deeply by others. They feel that the depth of the pain and the severity of the injustice excuse them from not forgiving. The plumb line that God uses to determine whether we are obligated to forgive others is not the emotion connected with the offense. He uses Jesus as His standard. If Jesus wouldn't forgive you for a particular sin, then you are not obligated to forgive anyone who commits that sin against you. If Jesus would forgive you, then you are obligated to forgive also.

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Forgiveness isn't always easy. It takes real commitment. We not only need to be committed to the Lord, but we must be committed to one another. If we are committed to bearing with one another, then we need to walk in forgiveness so that the grievances that inevitably occur in relationships won't accumulate and give way to bitterness and hatred. When people are estranged, forgiveness is the first step towards reconciliation.

Colossians 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Discussion Questions

Make a list of people in your life that you think that you may have not forgiven. Ask the Father to bring any to your mind that you may not initially think about.

Write them down. Take each one before the Father and forgive them, taking them off your hook and putting them on God's hook.

For those that you are struggling with forgiving due to the deep emotions or pain, ask the Father to give you the grace strength, and courage to release them to Him by forgiving them. You will be free from the heavy weight of carrying their offense through unforgiveness.

Whenever you feel the resurging of the emotions from the offense of those you have forgiven, take a moment and reconfirm before the Father in prayer that you forgive them and refuse to take them off His hook and put them on your hook.

You may want to ask a trusted Jesus Follower to join you in prayer through this process.