

“The Starting Point of Forgiveness”

Bad Blood Sermon Series | Week Two | Newbreak Church

November 7th, 2021

In this week’s study, we begin our series about forgiveness. This week focuses on the barriers that keep us from having a forgiving heart, in essence, answering the question: How do I develop a heart that forgives others?

Start Here

- What movie do you wish you could watch again for the first time?
- What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read [John 8:2-11](#)

Point 1 – Be honest about what is keeping me from forgiving others.

John 8:2-11 is a challenging story, that is if we are honest with ourselves. Why is that? Because we like to think we are like Jesus in the story, but oftentimes we are like the religious leaders holding stones. In the narrative, the religious leaders are defending the honor of the law, saying they have the legal right to put this woman caught in adultery to death. There is a truth here. They do have that legal right according to the Torah. However, the whole Bible, including the Torah, records God’s merciful dealings with people, even when mercy was not a granted or guaranteed response. Furthermore, God often is trying to tell His people that they ought to be merciful even like Him! (Check out the book of Jonah for a quick four-chapter example of this!)

[“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” \(Luke 6:36, NIV\).](#)

What was happening in the hearts of the people in John 8 is what happens in our hearts, and why we sometimes lack a heart of compassion.

- “They’re guilty,” we say. And it may even be true! But we are guilty too, even if not for the same sin.
- “They deserve punishment.” Potentially! But instead of retributive justice, what if we looked for a path of restorative justice?
- “I would never do that!” Maybe, or maybe not. But that does not have any bearing in regards to whether or not God calls us to forgive someone.

These are complex issues. The hurt can be very real and the actions can be inexcusable (more on that next week), but forgiveness is not about whether we think someone deserves it or not. We allow the forgiveness offered to us in Christ to be the inspiration in how we handle these things (like our theme verse for this series, Ephesians 4:32).

After all, **while forgiveness may be a journey, it is not an optional one for a Christ-follower**, *let that sink in*. By God’s grace, we are empowered to give grace.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What is something about the story (John 8:2-11) that sticks out to you? What are some details you would highlight, circle, or underline? Why those?
- What is the relationship between forgiveness and judiciary justice? Think about this tension and elaborate.
- “While forgiveness may be a journey, it is not an optional one for a Christ-follower.” How do you feel when you read this? How might the Holy Spirit be speaking to you right now?

Read Matthew 7:1-5

Point 2 – Ask God to work on my heart first.

Jesus tells us a story in Matthew 18 of a king who wanted to settle all of his outstanding debts with his servants. So, he called one of his servants and told him to pay up, or he would throw him, and all of his family, into prison. The servant fell at the feet of the king and begged the king to have mercy. The king relented and said that his whole debt was canceled. He was free and clear. This servant was

given a precious gift of freedom from his debts and what does he decide to do? He goes and finds someone who owes him money and when that man can't pay the servant back, the servant has him thrown into prison until he could pay back all he owed. The king found out how the servant had treated someone else when the king had shown him compassion and mercy first and the king threw him into jail until he could pay back all he owed. Then Jesus says, ["This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart"](#) (Matthew 18:35, NIV).

Jesus is reminding us here that our Heavenly Father forgave us first. We had a huge debt with Him that we had no hope of repaying. When we asked for mercy and forgiveness, He granted it immediately. And it cost Him everything. It cost Him His only Son. God knows the price of forgiveness. He knows what's at stake. He knows that we may have to wait for justice if we forgive. He knows that our pride could be wounded if we forgive. He knows that people may say we are weak, or don't stand up for ourselves. He knows that the enemy will use the "right to get even" lie to attack and derail us. But God tells us that the same was done to Jesus. Jesus experienced all of the betrayal and the image of looking weak to a world that didn't understand what God promises to those who are obedient. ["For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you"](#) (Matthew 6:14, NIV).

God wants us to focus our attention on our hearts, on our relationship with Him, and let Him change those around us. When we remember all that God has forgiven us for, it is easier to more freely forgive those who have wronged us. This is not to say that forgiveness is easy. It's not. Sometimes we have to take hurt and anger to God again and again to have the strength to forgive. Thankfully, God loves when we come to Him to ask Him for help to change our hearts toward others, to have a heart of compassion. Forgiveness frees us to do the will of our Father. We no longer carry the burden of bitterness and hurt. God's promises are sure and we can trust that He will make good on them.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Would it be easier to forgive someone if you spent some time in prayer confessing your sins before you tried to forgive that person? Why or why not?

- How do you feel when you truly and completely forgive someone? How do you feel when you do not forgive someone?
- What are you most afraid of if you forgive someone who has wronged you from your heart? What does God promise if you do forgive? Does this alleviate that fear?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?