



## WORDS MATTER: Forgiveness

*What the words we use truly mean.*

### **Opening Prayer:**

All merciful Father, all our sins against you are forgiven by you in Christ. Turn us to forgive those who sin against us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Q: How is the word "forgiveness" used in daily life? What do people mean when they say they forgive someone?**

*A: Answers will vary. Some simply mean that they will try to forget what has happened. Others are speaking about a change for them internally, being more at peace with a situation. Some think of telling others everything is okay whether it is or not. People also speak about forgiving themselves. Politicians talk about forgiving student loan debt.*

### **Q: What is your definition of forgiveness?**

*A: Answers will vary.*

### **Q: What is our culture's definition(s) of forgiveness?**

*A: Most often in our culture, forgiveness is spoken of as something one does for themselves, to move on from a hurtful incident or time. Some might also speak about the benefit of forgiving yourself or having someone else forgive you of something you did. It is often looked at as a way to acquire "inner peace."*

### **Q: How does the dictionary define what it means to forgive?**

*A: Some of the definitions of forgive at Merriam-Webster online include:*

- *to cease to feel resentment against (an offender)*
- *to give up resentment of or claim to requital*
- *to grant relief from payment of a debt*

### **Q: In order to understand forgiveness rightly, we must understand God's own forgiveness. What does Isaiah 59:1-2 say about why forgiveness from God is needed?**

*A: Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that He does not hear." These verses tell us that if our sins remain, we remain separated from God's presence and his grace.*

**Q: What does God promise regarding our sin in 1 John 1:9?**

*A: 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He promises to remove in those who repent the very sins which separate God from people.*

**Q: If our sins are removed from us, where have they gone according to Colossians 2:13-14?**

*A: Colossians 2:13-14 says, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross." Our sins were placed upon Jesus on the cross. This is how they were removed from us.*

**Q: What is the result of God's forgiveness according to 2 Corinthians 5:19?**

*A: 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation?" By removing our sins, He also removes the separation between us, reconciling us, that we might live at peace with God.*

**Q: How does God's forgiveness affect the forgiveness we share with others according to Ephesians 4:32?**

*A: Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Our forgiveness is to be like God's forgiveness. Since He removes the guilt of the sinner and is reconciled to them, our forgiveness is to be the same. We forgive for the sake of the other and are reconciled to them.*

**Q: How seriously are we to take our responsibility to forgive according to Matthew 6:14-15?**

*A: Matthew 6:14-15 says, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." If we will not forgive, we place ourselves in peril of God removing his forgiveness from us.*

**Q: So what things are essential to forgiveness?**

*A: It is action where we give up our right to hold a person responsible for their sin. Our forgiveness removes their sins from them and means that we will no longer hold a grudge. We are reconciled to them.*

**Closing Prayer:**

Almighty God, if you kept a record of sin, who could stand? But with you, there is forgiveness. May the same be said of us, your children. In Jesus' name. Amen.