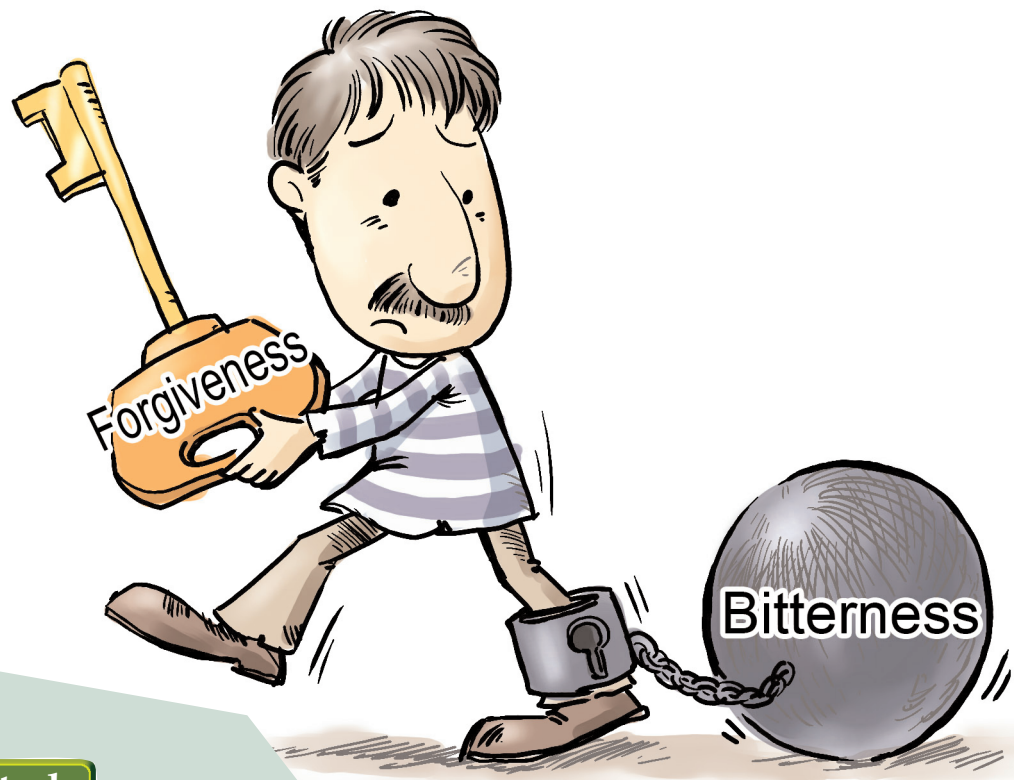


Bitterness and Forgiveness



Getting Started

What can we gain by forgiving someone? Can we gain anything by refusing to forgive?

Forgiveness goes against our nature. When people hurt us, we naturally want to punish them for it. Perhaps even more difficult is asking for forgiveness, which hurts our pride. But forgiveness is necessary to keep any relationship going. And it is necessary for our own peace of mind. When we forgive someone, we set him free from his guilt. But what we might not realize is that we are also setting ourselves free, from the prison of bitterness and anger.

Improving Your Vocabulary

bitterness (n) - very bad feelings, usually as a result of being disappointed or hurt;

constant anger

accounts (n) - records that keep track of money paid and money owed

debt (n) - something, usually money, owed to someone

choke (v) - to cut off someone's air so that he/she cannot breathe

mercy (n) - undeserved kindness and/or forgiveness

conclude (v) - to bring to an end

condone (v) - to say someone's actions are acceptable

Reading God's Word

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?" **22** "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven," **23** because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. **24** He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. **25** The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. **26** The servant fell on his knees before the king. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay you everything!" **27** The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go. **28** Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he said. **29** His fellow servant fell down and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!" **30** But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he could pay the debt. **31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. **32** So he called the servant in. "You worthless slave!" he said. "I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because

you asked me to.” **33** You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.’ **34** The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he could pay back the whole amount.” **35** And Jesus concluded, “That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

For further study, see Hebrews 12:15; Ephesians 4:31-32; Matthew 6:14-15; Colossians 3:12-15 and 1 Peter 4:8.

Taking a Closer Look

1. How many times does Jesus say we should forgive? Does this mean on the 491st time we can stop forgiving? (18:22)

2. How much money did the first servant owe? What was the king's original judgment? (18:24, 25)

3. Why did the king change his mind? (18:27)

4. How much did the second servant owe the first? (18:28)

5. How did the first servant treat the man who owed him money? (18:28-30)

6. When the king found out, what did he do? (18:31-34)

7. Who does the king represent? Who do the servants represent?

Taking Action

1. Forgiveness is so difficult mostly because of our pride. How can we put our pride behind us and make it easier to forgive?
2. Forgiveness does not mean condoning what a person has done. How can we forgive someone, and tell them in a spirit of love how they have hurt us?

Memory Verse: 1 Corinthians 13:5

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

Review the Vocabulary

Discuss your answers with a classmate.

1. Have you ever been in **debt** to anyone?
2. Have you ever felt **bitter** about anything?
3. What are some things we should not **condone**?
4. Who should we have **mercy** on? Who has **mercy** on us?



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