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# THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

## Forgive Us Our Debts

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*“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” ~Matthew 6:12*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Few principles in the kingdom of God are more important than forgiveness—and few are more misunderstood. Forgiveness is the basis upon which you and I are able to relate to God. He has forgiven our sins against Him, and He has offered us forgiveness (ahead of time) for all the sins that we will surely commit against Him in the future. We would have no hope of future relationship with God if that relationship depended on our ability to keep from “*falling into debt*” to Him.

Time and time again, we totally “blow it” and need forgiveness. We sin against the Lord in so many ways—sometimes unknowingly, but most of the time very consciously. We say things and do things that hurt Him terribly. We take Him for granted; we are insensitive to His feelings; we ask His advice, but then don’t follow it; we promise Him our tomorrows, then steal them back; we pretend we do not know Him in public; we blame Him for things He never did, and forget to thank Him when He helps us. We ignore Him until we need Him, then we ignore Him until the next time...

As far as friends go, as far as just treating someone decently—we are not very good in our relationship with God. And that does not even touch on the subject of how we relate to other humans! If we were to add up all the times we have uttered “give-me-another-chance” and “I’m-so-sorry-I’ll-never-do-it-again,” the sum would be huge—but nothing close to the total number of wrongs we have committed.

If God chose to “settle accounts” with us, we would have no hope of paying Him back.

### **FORGIVENESS DEFINED**

1. *Aphiemi*—send away, forsake, leave behind, lay aside, let alone, omit, put aside.
2. Forgiveness is not a denial that a wrong took place; it is a decision not to exact punishment or penalty for the wrong. Forgiveness changes the sentence, *not* the verdict.
3. Forgiveness is not a statement that says, “*What happened was no big deal.*”
4. Forgiving someone is not the same as entrusting yourself to that person without reservation, or willingly making yourself vulnerable to him or her again.
5. Forgiveness is a decision about the future, not a feeling about the past.

### **REMEMBERING THE PRIMARY DEBT (MATTHEW 18:21-35)**

1. How we forgive other people has implications for how God forgives us.
2. There are always two debts to consider, and both debtors must be treated alike.
3. In the kingdom of God, the surest and safest way to recover “bad debts” is to transfer them to the same bank where neither rust nor thief has power.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN I’M HAVING A HARD TIME FORGIVING**

4. Am I waiting for the people to ask for forgiveness—and have I given them ample opportunity to acknowledge their wrong (see Matthew 18:15-17)?
5. Am I still hoping that the person can “pay in full” and restore what was lost?
6. When or where have I done the same sort of thing (that has been done to me) in my heart or mind?
7. Do I unknowingly believe that the wrongdoer has more control over my future than God does?
8. Do I unknowingly want to have more control over another person’s future than I’m willing to let God have?

9. Am I as open to seeing my own failings in other areas, with other people as I want people to be about seeing their failings with me?
  
10. What do I really want?