

Obstacles to Relationship: Laying Down Our Stones and Learning to Forgive

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

I am sure you can tell by now, I AM NOT PERFECT. -And I can tell that you are not perfect too!

-We are all debtors; we are all sinners. We have all screwed up in life!

In this text, (the whole chapter) Jesus is giving us instructions on maintaining healthy relationships and experiencing "Life," despite our imperfections.

-God has made relationships mandatory for us.

(Cars are designed to be driven. ILL)

You were designed to "know" and to be "known" by others.

-Forgiveness is mandatory for our own spiritual and emotional health & for healthy relationships

(Truck Loan III) -Forgiveness is forgiving a debt. *Eric, but you don't understand; I have been deeply... hurt.*

Learning to forgive IS NOT just following "the rules;" it the gateway to "LIFE."

(God's rules have reasons III)

Bitterness = Bad / Un-forgiveness = Bad

From Harvard Medical School Health Publications:

Power of Forgiveness - Forgive Others *December 2004

BOSTON , MA –This New Year's, an unconventional resolution may be one of the healthiest you can make—learning to forgive more easily. According to an article in the January issue of Harvard Women's Health Watch , forgiving those who hurt you can improve your mental and physical wellbeing. It may come as a surprise that forgiving is a skill you can hone, and that granting forgiveness may actually do more for you than the person you forgive.

Reduced stress: Researchers found that mentally nursing a grudge puts your body through the same strains as a major stressful event: Muscles tense, blood pressure rises, and sweating increases. **Better heart health:** One study found a link between forgiving someone for a betrayal and improvements in blood pressure and heart rate, and a decreased workload for the heart. **Stronger relationships:** A 2004 study showed that women who were able to forgive their spouses and feel benevolent toward them resolved conflicts more effectively. **Reduced pain:** A small study on people with chronic back pain found that those who practiced meditation focusing on converting anger to compassion felt less pain and anxiety than those who received regular care. **Greater happiness:** When you forgive someone, you make yourself—rather than the person who hurt you—responsible for your happiness. One survey showed that people who talk about forgiveness during psychotherapy sessions experience greater improvements than those who don't.

Learning to forgive is essential in order for us to live a healthy life and to experience healthy relationships.

-Forgiving is **NOT** ignoring the wrong has been done.

*Quick review of why it is not healthy just to “forget.”

Forgiving is making a choice to release, grant mercy and love again.

We must willingly take on the character of our Father to practice this.

(Amy's thoughts on hurt people sitting in church III) -a spiritual hospital where no one is being treated...

(Stained Glass Masquerade III) -So many people are doing church wrong, throwing each other away...

-Peter's question:

“How many times should I forgive?” *Peter's question comes from a “legalistic” viewpoint.

-Jesus' response:

“For healthy, lifelong relationships AND for your own emotional and spiritual health; AS NEEDED.”

*Jesus' response comes from a relational viewpoint.

-This is not a rule; it is a very pragmatic statement; if you are going to be in authentic relationship, you are going to have to love, forgive and seek peace, repeatedly...

(Amy III)

Forgiveness is not like “chemotherapy;” forgiveness should be a healthy habit that should be a daily part of our lives. -How often does God forgive us?

**Forgiveness is not “a feeling;” forgiveness is a decision from the center of your will.

Comments regarding reconciliation, boundaries and common sense:

*Forgiving someone does not mean you “take ownership” of blame -that does not belong to you. (Jesus III)

*Be careful of “one-sided forgiveness.” -*being the only one who says, “I'm sorry.”* Indicator of an unhealthy relationship

*There are times where we need to forgive -and be silent...

*You will encounter those who will not want to practice these principles; -*healthy relationships take depth.*

Divorce: I never could understand it; then (My experience with a relationship ending III)

*When we decide to break these principles and constantly punish & judge by not forgiving and releasing, we destroy ourselves and our relationships.

Bitterness & Un-forgiveness are heavy weights to carry.

Read John 8 -The woman caught "in the act."

The Stained glass Masquerade

Is there anyone that fails? Is there anyone that falls?

Am I the only one in church today feelin' so small?

Cause when I take a look around, Everybody seems so strong

I know they'll soon discover, That I don't belong

So I tuck it all away, like everything's okay

If I make them all believe it, maybe I'll believe it too

So with a painted grin, I play the part again

So everyone will see me the way that I see them

Are we happy plastic people? Under shiny plastic steeples?

With walls around our weakness And smiles to hide our pain

But if the invitation's open, To every heart that has been broken

Maybe then we close the curtain, On our stained glass masquerade

Is there anyone who's been there? Are there any hands to raise?

Am I the only one who's traded, the altar for a stage?

The performance is convincing and we know every line by heart

Only when no one is watching, Can we really fall apart

But would it set me free, If I dared to let you see

The truth behind the person, That you imagine me to be

Would your arms be open, Or would you walk away?

Would the love of Jesus be enough to make you stay?

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With walls around our weakness And smiles to hide our pain

But if the invitation's open, To every heart that has been broken

Maybe then we close the curtain, On our stained glass masquerade

Is there anyone that fails?

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Am I the only one in church today feelin' so small?