

Lesson 18: Overcoming Grudges and Forgiving

This lesson deals with something of which all human beings are guilty. Everyone has refused to forgive someone, held a grudge, let bad feelings grow against a person, maybe even hated them and wanted to get even. Perhaps you are refusing to forgive someone right now in your life.

Sometimes when the pain or anger is deep, we find forgiving someone very hard or almost impossible. Yet Jesus tells us to be forgiving people:

Luke 6:27

Whom does Jesus want us to love and forgive? _____

Nobody ever said forgiving is easy. It is often very hard. But Jesus reveals the secret to forgiving and loving others, especially those who have hurt us or treated us unfairly. It begins with knowing Christ.

What did Christ say after He was betrayed by a close friend, was forsaken by all His disciples, heard the lies of many false witnesses, was condemned in a mock trial, was spit upon and beaten, had thorns pushed into His head, saw the crowds calling for His death, was abused and mocked by the cruel soldiers, was kept up all night by evil rulers, was made to carry a rough heavy cross through the streets, was striped naked, and was nailed to the cross and suspended in the air to wait for death as he suffered the punishment of all sin of all time, for eternity? What did Jesus say?

What is the main reason that people hold grudges and refuse to forgive? _____

1 Peter 5:5

What is God's attitude toward those who are proud? _____

What is God's attitude toward forgiving and loving? _____

What is Humility? _____

Humility comes from having the right understanding of ourselves before God.

Isaiah 64:6

What should we understand according to Isaiah? _____

1 John 2:1

What should we understand according to John, who is writing to newly converted Christians?

As Christians we recognize that it is only sinful human pride that refuses to forgive someone for whom Christ died. Likewise, we recognize that there is no such thing as a Christian who is ultimately unable to forgive. We recognize that we choose not to forgive because of pride. Forgiveness is not a feeling, but a fact.

1 John 4:20

What should we understand according to John in the verse above, particularly about those who refuse to forgive? _____

1 Corinthians 13:2.

What are we without love? _____

1 Peter 4:8.

When we have love in our hearts, and someone sins against us, what will our response be?

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, that love hardly even notices when a wrong has been done to it. It is clear from the Bible and from psychology that grudges, hatred, feelings of revenge are only self-destructive. If we permit them in our hearts, these feelings will grow like a cancer and eat up every good thing in us: our ability to love and show kindness, our sensitivity, our inner peace, etc.. When the love of Christ fills us, our personality is complete and healthy and whole as His love breaks out to others. Yet, how can we love and forgive when someone has hurt us so much? Jesus show us the way with a parable: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

Why should we forgive others, no matter what they have done? _____

The person who cannot forgive understands nothing of the greatness of God's forgiveness. Once we truly recognize that God has died for our sins and forgiven us the mountain of debt that we owe Him, we will find the power and the will to forgive the little debts which others have sinned against us. Those of the world refuse to forgive and love those who have sinned against them. **We are not of the world. Jesus has taken us from the darkness**

of this world and has made us the _____.

John 13:34

How does Jesus want us to love others? _____

If we love others and forgive their mistakes and sins, what will be the result? _____

Unforgiving Christians can never win the lost for a forgiving Lord. An unforgiving Christian denies the Lord of Love, and in fact, works against the Kingdom of Christ. The love and forgiveness that we have received from the Lord will break out of us and extend itself to others. Forgiveness is never conditional (attaching conditions or demands). True forgiveness is always unconditional. Forgiveness is never partial. It is always complete and total. It is not something that we will do in the future. True forgiveness is immediate, even if we get nothing in return.

HOMEWORK

- 1) Examine your heart and life. Are you holding a grudge against someone, or are you refusing to forgive someone? Deal with it this week. Pray about it. Ask the Lord to help in the struggle to forgive. Work hard on your attitude. Make up your mind that you are going to keep working hard at eliminating this sin with God's help until an unforgiving heart is replaced with a heart bursting with love and forgiveness.
- 2) With someone, pray for the gift of love and forgiveness, especially for people who are hard to love and forgive.

