

“Go and be Reconciled” - Matthew 5:23-24

Pastor Burt Garwood – May 21, 2017

Some people think they can never be forgiven; that they are destined to go hell. God’s truth is that no sin is too great for God to forgive for those who trust in Jesus as their Savior.

- Think about the greatness and power and grace of God: If there was a sin too big for God’s forgiveness, then Satan wins and God loses because God’s isn’t big enough to forgive all sin. And God must not be very powerful or gracious.
- But God’s grace is greater than the greatest sin. There is no sin so big that God can’t forgive.
- God’s forgiveness releases us from the penalty of eternity in hell for our sin (Romans 6:23 & Ephesians 2:13).
- Some of you needed to hear that today because you’re living with a sin that Satan has convinced you is unforgivable. Satan is lying to you. God is ready to forgive, no matter how bad it is.

Some people long for forgiveness that they don’t really need.

- I see it in the eyes of a young adult still reeling from the pain of her parents' divorce because she thinks it was her fault.
- Or from a victim of abuse...that he did something to deserve being abused by his dad.
- They might not need forgiveness. But they certainly need to be set free from their prison. Jesus can do that through us as we love them to health in his name.

When you forgive others, tell them the real source of forgiveness is Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:32).

- Forgiveness is not a feeling. Many times, I don’t feel like forgiving for various reasons. But I’m commanded by God and called by God to forgive. Forgiveness is a decision to follow God’s command.

Two Types of Forgiveness

- One is an attitude of forgiveness that forgives ahead of time.
- The other happens when someone apologizes.

Jesus did this for us 2,000 years ago on the cross when he proclaimed forgiveness for all humanity...the sins of the past and the sins of the future. Our Father-God is waiting with arms wide open to forgive us when we apologize.

- We follow Jesus by offering both types of forgiveness. We should always have an automatic attitude of forgiveness.
- An attitude of forgiveness says ahead of time, “I know we’re going to mess up because nobody is without sin, but I want you to know now, that I will choose to forgive when we go through tough times.”
- The second type of forgiveness happens when someone apologizes (Luke 17:3).

READ: Luke 15:21-32

- The son comes to his senses and decides to return home and apologize to his father. Before he can even say the words, his dad interrupts and welcomes him home and throws a party for his lost son who had been found.
- The father’s mercy is key. The father could have disciplined him, but the son had already suffered the consequences. He had already been humbled, broken and apologetic.
- Many times, people are already suffering the consequences for their actions. They are already in great pain.
- Our calling in those situations is to come alongside and offer mercy, grace and love.

However, when they are unapologetic and smug...discipline is in order. If we really love someone, we will discipline them and allow them to suffer the consequences because we know that “adversity builds character.” READ: Proverbs 3:11-12

- During this time of discipline, it is our duty to come alongside them and love them through their pain. Otherwise they will become bitter to us.

An unforgiving heart disrupts our ability to worship God. God takes forgiveness so seriously, that he tells us to stop our worship, to go and make amends with the other person, then come back and worship. READ: Matthew 5:23-24

God is always ready to forgive. Most of the time, we are the bottleneck in this process when we refuse to forgive others.

When forgiving someone we can say: “In response to God’s love and forgiveness for me, I forgive you. In particular...”

- I promise not to think about this incident.
- I promise not to bring this incident up again and use it against you.
- I promise not to talk to others about this incident.
- I promise to not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

1 Corinthians 13:5 *“Love...keeps no record of wrongs.”*

The father welcomed his estranged son with open arms. He prepared a great feast. He cooked up a fattened calf. It was probably the biggest homecoming that family had ever experienced.

God is calling us to do the same. To offer love, grace, care and forgiveness to those who return from their wrong ways.

Are you ready to restore relationships to their original condition? Are your arms wide open? Are you preparing a feast?