

Peter and the Uncertainty of
FORGIVENESS



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MONDAY – The importance of forgiveness



Luke 23: 33-34 *When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on His right and the other on His left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

This week we will be searching along with Peter to discover the importance of forgiveness, what it really means in our lives and why it is so difficult to put into practice. We will look for answers as we begin to understand the difference it makes in our existence.

It certainly was of the utmost importance to Jesus who taught us to pray "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." He talked often about forgiving and in His final moments on the cross He prayed "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Peter was looking for an answer, he asked a straight-forward question: "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." Matt 18 :21-22

Jewish law held that a person was only required to forgive someone three times, Peter was offering seven

times! Would that not make him a good disciple?

If we are honest with ourselves the reasons that we love Peter is because so often we can see ourselves in his responses.

Was his motivation, and often ours, to prove that he was the better person, or that God would be pleased with him?

A world of commodity is a world in which scores are kept, books are balanced, and nothing is ever forgotten. It is a world of despair, because we are locked in forever to old behaviour. New possibility, however, can happen in that world only when there is forgiveness, when in an act of inexplicable generosity, the vicious cycles of resentment and revenge are broken. Walter Brueggemann

Let's stay with Peter as he begins to learn from Jesus not how many times to forgive but what forgiveness is actually all about.



Prayer: Gracious God, forgiveness does not come naturally to me. Teach me to understand how forgiving can change this world

<https://youtu.be/TIARyE78vjw> At Your Feet (A Prayer of Repentance) - YouTube

TUESDAY – Seventy times seven?



Matt 18 : 21-22 *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.”*”

Seventy times seven! I can imagine Peter doing the math and wondering how on earth to keep track of offenses.

There is something in us as well which totals up the number of sins against us and how often we are called to forgive. But this was not what Jesus was saying. He was looking at the deeper question. Why should we forgive? What is forgiveness?

The Jewish community would have understood the symbolic meaning of the number seven. They would have understood that it symbolised perfection. God created the world in six days but it was not complete until He reflected and rested. On the seventh day it was finished and so the number seven conveyed a sense of completion and a call to restoration, healing and reconciliation.

Every seventh day – rest. Every seventh year – land to rest. Every seventh cycle of seven years – forgiveness of debts. Human rest every seven days was in harmony

with the created order in which God rested on the seventh day. It involved joining with God who brought order out of chaos and is always working to bring restoration, rest and healing out of a broken world. Forgiveness means that we are participating with God in the restoration of all creation to its original health, wholeness and goodness. When we forgive we participate in the restoration of the whole world back to the way it was originally intended!

Forgiveness is nothing less than kingdom building. This is why Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father, who is in heaven, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...”

What an amazing thought! We can be a part of the restoration of our world.



Jesus, I want to be a part of this amazing challenge of restoring our world to wholeness and order. Please teach me day by day just how important it is to learn to forgive and help me to take the steps to enable this in my life. AMEN

<https://youtu.be/EKQs5ITdt0I>

WEDNESDAY – Forgiveness and healing



Hebrews 8 : 12 *For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.*

“Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive.” C S Lewis

What does this act of forgiveness mean in our lives? Forgiving means letting go of the things that bind us. There is healing in forgiveness, both emotionally and mentally.

Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, blood pressure, and levels of anxiety, depression and stress. And research points to an increase in the forgiveness-health connection as you age.

[Karen Swartz, M.D.](#) The Johns Hopkins Hospital

Healing and forgiveness go hand in hand, forgiving means we participate in the healing of a broken creation back into divine order. Letting go of our pain and anger frees us to live with a new sense of peace and joy – but does this mean that we are required to “forgive and forget”? Anyone who has experienced harm because of the actions of another knows that

it is impossible to simply forget. There has to be a better way. Memories don’t just disappear. Neither does forgiving mean that we try to pretend that nothing ever happened.

Forgiveness involves a conscious choice to end the cycle of bitterness and grudge-holding, it means that you will stop trying to hurt the person who has wronged you. It means that you make a conscious choice to move the pain away from the core of who you are. Instead of trying to forget the hurt, it means that you decide not to be defined by that pain.

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.
C S Lewis

What difference does it make for you to see the act of forgiveness as not just a private act between two people but as a participation in God’s act of restoring all of broken creation?



Dear God, I need to find the strength to let go of hurt and distress and allow You to let Your forgiveness flow through me to those who have caused my pain. I give this over to You today. AMEN

<https://youtu.be/iUV5T9JIZ0A> Heart That Forgives - YouTube

Thursday – Saying three hard words



Luke 17: 4 *And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

Archbishop Desmond Tutu says that the three hardest words to say are "I am sorry". He grew up with an abusive father and has spent his life learning how to forgive. Despite intellectual understanding and spiritual conviction, he came to the conclusion that forgiveness remains difficult.

Jesus' words to Peter, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." remind us that the primary question is not how often, but why we should forgive.

Tutu continues, saying, "Why would I do such a thing?" He realised that this was the only way to heal the pain of his boyhood heart. Forgiveness is not dependent on the actions of others... we don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. He concludes that

forgiveness is the best form of self-interest.

Why then do we find the words "I am sorry" so difficult to say? Saying these words and owning our part in whatever has happened helps us to free ourselves from our mistakes and move forward.

Working through forgiveness requires a choice to slowly and steadily push the hurt away from the centre of your life so that it is no longer governing us. It will take time; it always takes time. Be patient with yourself and keep going.

In what ways is it difficult to forgive, not just because of what someone else has done but because of your own reluctance, inability or misunderstanding?



Dear God, forgiveness is something that Your word requires us to do, however difficult it may be. Thank You that You have given us the example of forgiveness in the cross of Jesus. As we move towards Lent, help me to be courageous and scrupulous in examining my life and to work, with your help, towards forgiving those who have wronged me. AMEN

<https://youtu.be/a5XLy26Ot50>

FRIDAY – Embracing the uncertain



Ephesians 4: 32 *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

What have we learned about Peter's question to Jesus? We have learned that forgiveness is not optional in the Christian life. It is a high calling, something sacred which God prompts us to do.

God calls us to forgive, enables us to forgive and in doing so we become part of healing our world. And yet, we find forgiveness difficult, we are filled with uncertainty, so we reflect, we pray, we ask for strength and we examine some questions in order to move us to a better place.

Think about times in your life when it was difficult to forgive a wrong that had been done to you. What made forgiveness hard?

Think about times when you have caused harm to someone. Have you asked for forgiveness? What

would help in repairing that relationship?

Perhaps you would like to pause and ask God to help you to recalibrate your motivation for forgiveness.

Finally, think about how you need to forgive yourself. How do you experience the grace and mercy of God? Can you move past your guilt and shame and claim the life of peace God wants for you?

1 John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have God's promise - He is faithful. We need not wait, let today be the day that you begin a new journey of forgiveness.



God thank You that I can come into Your presence in honesty, confessing how much uncertainty there is still in me, but knowing that You will walk with me as I learn to follow the example of Jesus and embrace forgiveness both for myself and for any I need to forgive. I trust You to guide me all the days of my life. AMEN

[Forgiveness by Matthew West \(with lyrics\) - YouTube](https://youtu.be/eYTnTorkkxg)
<https://youtu.be/eYTnTorkkxg>