**MOVING FORWARD**

**WITH AN UNFORGIVEN PAST (PART 2)**

Sunday School Lesson 10

*FORMER THINGS*

Luke 6:27-28

4/10/2022

**Introduction:** For our tenth lesson in our series on Former Things, we are going to spend another week looking at the Scriptural approach to moving forward with an unforgiven past. As a reminder, the ideal result is that we will be a forgiving people and find forgiveness from others when we ask for it. Offering forgiveness to others is the best way to help them move forward from the regrets of their past. When we do not forgive, we hurt ourselves because we shut off the valve of answered prayers, and we greatly wound our spirit. Despite this fact, we have all likely encountered a situation where we had to try to move on from a past decision that someone will not forgive us of. In last week’s lesson, we observed that you cannot force someone to forgive you. Trying to force forgiveness often inflames the situation, and it rarely brings about the desired result of forgiveness. We also realized that anger is an appropriate response to being wronged. For this reason, we must not be surprised when the offended party is angry, and we must not try to reprove their anger. Next, we came to understand that you must receive the rebuke or punishment that comes along with your transgression, even if the offended person does not offer you forgiveness. The last observation of the lesson is that forgiveness is not something that is earned. It is simple given. Let’s continue from there today:

1. **YOU MUST FORGIVE THE PERSON WHO REFUSES TO FORGIVE YOU.**
2. **Notice that an unforgiven person has been wronged by the unforgiving person (Matthew 18:28-33; Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32; Luke 6:31; 2 Corinthians 2:7).** When a person refuses to forgive you, the Bible shows us that they are now just as guilty of wronging you as you were of them. The example from Scripture is of the unforgiving servant. He had his debts forgiven, but then the Bible shows us that he dealt wrongly with the person who owed him a debt. He would not offer that person forgiveness, and he even went so far as to bring about physical harm to the offender. As a result of this, the judge was very upset and punished him for his wrong against his fellowservant. For the believer, forgiveness is not just a matter of personal feelings or choice. We are commanded to forgive. When we do not forgive, we injure our brother in Christ. We greatly hinder them from the work of Christ. We cause them to be overwhelmed with an unnecessary burden of sorrow. We are commanded to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. It would be a great thing for the unforgiving person to understand that he is guilty of wronging the offender.
3. **Notice that forgiveness should be offered even if it is never requested (Matthew 6:12-15; 18:21-22; Luke 6:27; 23:34).** Knowing that the unforgiving person has wronged the trespasser, the challenge then falls on the trespasser to offer forgiveness to the very same person who would not forgive them. This is a very difficult thing to do. Can you forgive a person who may not even think that he has wronged you, and he certainly is not coming to you seeking forgiveness? How often does an unforgiving person ask forgiveness to the person who has wronged them? It never happens in the moment, but it might happen occasionally after the person realizes their error and offers you first their forgiveness. We can and must forgive the unforgiver. Otherwise, we create a vicious cycle of discord, sorrow, and unanswered prayer. When the Bible speaks about forgiveness, It does not state that we must wait for the offending party to ask for it before we give it. Jesus offered His forgiveness on the cross before any one of those people there were asking for it. If a person truly wants to move on from an unforgiven past, then he must offer forgiveness to the unforgiver. Do not allow stubbornness to get in the way of making things right.
4. **YOU MUST PRAY FOR THE PERSON WHO REFUSES TO FORGIVE YOU.**

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1. **Notice that we are commanded to pray for others, even those who are our adversaries (James 5:16; 1 Timothy 2:1; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28).** If we prayed for people as we ought, then we would never have to deal with this matter of unforgiveness. That’s because it is hard to stay upset at someone when you are actively praying for them. The Bible commands us to pray for our enemies. Surely, if we can pray for our enemies, then we can pray for the brother or sister who has wronged us. When it comes to the unforgiving person, make it a matter of constant prayer to call out your unforgiver unto the Lord. Too often, we are overly busy having a pity party for our unforgiven offense, or we are more interested in making things even with the unforgiver. That person needs your prayer. Again, we must remember that the unforgiver can’t get answers to prayers. Thus, we can be the conduit of blessing by praying for them. Given that you likely won’t be interacting with the unforgiver as you offer forgiveness, the prayer room is a great place to audibly voice out your forgiveness before the Lord.
2. **Notice that prayer is the avenue that we take to get answers to the difficult problems of life (Matthew 17:21; 21:22; 26:42; Acts 1:24; 6:4; 14:23; 1 Thess. 3:10; James 5:15-18).** As believers, we should understand that prayer is the place that we find answers to difficult situations. Jesus is our greatest example of prayer. What did He do as He prepared to go to the cross? He prayed. What did He do before He even started His earthly ministry? He went into the wilderness to pray. What did He tell His disciples they needed to do in order to cast out devils? They needed to pray. It is not just the best answer; prayer is the only answer. Thus, the answer to dealing with unforgiveness is to pray. We ought not only pray for help and victory in dealing with an unforgiven past. We ought to pray also for the Lord to work in the heart of the unforgiving person. There are few things more hurtful than to hear someone tell you that they will never forgive you. There is only one thing left to do when you hear that statement from someone. You take the matter to the Lord and leave it with Him.
3. **YOU MUST NOT BECOME BITTER AT THE PERSON WHO REFUSES TO FORGIVE YOU.**
4. **Notice that bitterness takes root in places where forgiveness is not found (James 3:11-14; Colossians 3:19; Ephesians 4:30-32).** If you forgive and pray for those who will not forgive you, then this point of the lesson will not even be needed. However, if you do not forgive, the next step from there is bitterness. It is a terrible disease of the spirit, and it is something that you should try to avoid at all costs. It does not matter if the other party is dealing with bitterness or not; you cannot allow a lack of forgiveness to cause you to be bitter. I believe that the Bible shows us that bitterness is not just a struggle for the one who will not forgive, but it is also a struggle for the person who can’t find forgiveness. An interesting example of this is Peter. Of course, he is both the unforgiver and the unforgiven in this example. Peter was filled with bitterness after he denied Christ. I believe the reason for this is that he could not find forgiveness from himself. When we love someone who won’t forgive us, we are prone to responding to that lack of forgiveness with bitterness. We must resist this temptation.
5. **Notice that bitterness will always keep you firmly planted in the past (Hebrews 12:15; Luke 22:62; Lamentations 1:4; Proverbs 17:25; Ruth 1:20).** The Bible talks about the root of bitterness. It is an emotion that fixes itself within you once it arrives. It plants you firmly in the past. Have you ever met someone who is bitter who was not totally living in the past? It’s often the only thing they can talk about. They are stuck on some past circumstance or event that took place. If someone in the past wronged them, they are quick to bring that back up again and again. As we consider the entire focus of this lesson series being on the ability to move forward from the past, it would be impossible to overemphasize the damage that is caused by bitterness. It really hurts to not find forgiveness from someone that you love. Despite this difficulty, you must give the pain and cares associated with your unforgiven past to the Lord, or you will find yourself firmly planted in the bitterness of your past. There are plenty of examples in the Bible of those who were stuck in the bitterness of the past. Naomi is a great example of how it holds on to you.
6. **YOU MUST NOT BE PRIDEFUL TOWARD THE PERSON WHO REFUSES TO FORGIVE YOU.**
7. **Notice that there is no “right” person when it comes to a situation of unforgiveness (1 Corinthians 3:3; Proverbs 6:14-19).** This last point might seem strange given the topic, but there is a real potential for pride in this matter of unforgiveness. The reason is that we have a tendency to compare ourselves to the person who refuses to give us forgiveness. We think that we are on better footing than they are, but the truth is that both individuals are sinners who are hopefully saved by the grace of God. Discord and division that come from offenses against the brethren are mutual in their ownership. There must be the party that wrongs the other party, and then there must be an improper response from one of the parties when it comes time for forgiveness. Division, discord, and strife do not just appear out of thin air. As a result, there is culpability for all parties involved. We must not get high-minded and think that we are in the right. If you would have never made the sin, then there would never have been anything to forgive.
8. **Notice that all sin is an offense against God, and there is no pride in committing what we believe to be a “lesser” sin (James 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Matthew 12:31-32).** Have you ever seen two people argue about who came in last place and second to last place? That seems like a very foolish argument. This is the same type of argument that you find between two sinners. As you deal with your unforgiven past, do not make the mistake of comparing your sin against the sin of your unforgiving counterpart. That comparison does nothing to resolve the situation, and it will only lead to pride on your behalf. The best thing to do is to stay humble before the Lord and pray and forgive as already covered in this lesson. If you follow all of these objectives listed out over the last two lessons, I am certain that you will be able to move forward even from an unforgiven past. The main takeaway from this lesson is that you cannot allow unforgiveness to become a personal issue against the unforgiver.