

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

I. Introduction

- A. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35
- B. The type of love we are talking about is Christian love (“agape” love) which emphasizes selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love for others. The Bible teaches that unselfish love is the basis for true forgiveness, since “it keeps no record of wrongs” and chooses to let go of resentment and retribution.
- C. The big picture is that, as followers of God, we need to do what He did. God provided the ultimate example of extravagant forgiveness.
 - a. Rom 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - b. Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Since we are called to reflect Him to the world around us, we must extravagantly forgive as He does. We need the Holy Spirit to do this!

II. What Jesus says about forgiveness

- A. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)
 - 1. Kingdom of God (spirit) vs kingdom of this world (flesh)
 - 2. Unbridled mercy/forgiveness (King) vs unbridled revenge (Lamech)
- B. Forgiveness is a command. It is not based on how you feel; rather, it’s a choice we make to align our will to God’s will.
 - 1. “Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32
 - 2. Lord’s Prayer: “...and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.” Matthew 6:9-13

III. What does Paul mean by “keep a record of wrongs”?

“Love...doesn’t keep score of the sins of others.” MSG

- A. Scorekeeping
 - 1. Scorekeeping is futile in relationships because it’s impossible to keep an accurate and unbiased score.
 - 2. Scorekeeping creates owing and owing kills the generosity of the giver and the gratitude of the receiver.
 - 3. Scorekeeping promotes division, not unity (us against them)
- B. Love does not require us to turn a blind eye to sin
 - 1. Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul deals specifically and directly with various sins in the church—not in the spirit of legalism, but rather in the spirit of health and restoration. In a letter to the Galatians, Paul writes “If another believer has fallen

into sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person onto the right path.” (Galatians 6:1)

2. Matthew 7:20 “Just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.”
 3. John 8:32 “the truth will set you free.”
- C. Love covers...
1. 1 Peter 4:8 “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.” (love is expressed through the forgiveness of sins)
 2. Psalms 85:2 “You forgave the guilt of your people—yes, you covered all their sins.”

IV. Forgiveness vs Reconciliation

- A. Forgiveness can be extended regardless of the response from the offender
- B. Reconciliation depends upon response from the offender

V. Order of reconciliation

- A. Deal with my own heart first
 1. “First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5)
 2. “Search me, God, and know my heart...See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” (Psalm 139:23-24)
- B. Have a conversation (gentleness, humility, vulnerability, honesty)
 1. Go privately first; don’t lay them open publicly (Matthew 18)
 2. By sweeping it under the rug, we aren’t giving an opportunity for healing.
- C. Possible responses/outcomes from “offender” in response to conversation
 1. Repentance/apology/kindness → reconciliation in relationship
 2. Defensiveness/rejection/rebellion → boundaries and repositioning by offended

Discussion Questions

1. Let’s take a minute to listen and reflect upon a relationship that’s strained. Ask God to give you His perspective. Is He prompting you to do anything to move towards restoration?
2. Share a story of forgiveness in your own life (as either the offended or the offender). What was the outcome? (reconciliation or repositioning)
3. What is more difficult for you? To forgive someone or to seek reconciliation?
4. How do you forgive someone who is unrepentant as to how they’ve wronged you? What does this look like?
5. From your experience, how does an inability/unwillingness to forgive hurt or limit your soul?