

The Freedom of Forgiveness SSC Sunday April 12th, 2015 am

Introduction:

On any given Sunday, as we gather exchanging warm welcomes and greetings, there is, behind the appearance that all is well, a deep and pervasive need for many of us to experience the freedom of forgiveness.

Both receiving and granting forgiveness opens the door for a life free from guilt, anger, shame, bitterness and resentment.

Before you would tune me out and say that others do not understand the struggle of trying to forgive others, let me say that...

- We acknowledge how complex and difficult this can be in some cases.
- This is not a natural act...it is supernatural. That is why we need God's grace and power to accomplish this!

There are two aspects to forgiveness.

1. Receiving Forgiveness.

There is no greater joy than to hear the words "I forgive you."

Many live with unrelenting pain due to the fact that...

- there are people they have hurt and forgiveness has not been sought.
- they are afraid to engage the path that will lead to forgiveness.
- they are unable to forgive themselves and escape the shame.
- they are unwilling to acknowledge the wrongs that have been done.

The church is a forgiving community! There is no future without forgiveness.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God **forgave** you. Eph. 4:32

Just as Joseph gave his family and a nation a future through forgiveness, so we are giving people hope and a future through forgiveness!
(teaching it, modeling it, encouraging it)

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Psa. 32:1 (NKJ)

2. Granting Forgiveness.

Sometimes people struggle with forgiving others because they do not understand what true forgiveness is.

What forgiveness is NOT...

1. Forgiveness is not always easy.

- In some cases, yes. In difficult cases, it can be very hard.
- That is why *we must recognize our need for God's help* to forgive.
- Forgiveness is not a natural act. It is a super-natural act.

2. Forgiveness is not forgetting.

- Remembering is necessary to forgive.
- You can forgive, then have the memory come flooding back.
- This does not mean you have failed to forgive.
- You receive God's grace to release the offence once again.

3. Forgiveness is not synonymous with reconciliation.

- In some cases this is not possible. The person may have died.
- A close and trusting relationship is not advisable, especially if the individual has not changed.
- Forgiveness is not a two-way transaction. (hope in some cases)
- You – with God's help – are in contro!

4. Forgiveness is not letting the guilty “off the hook.”

That is...

- It is not condoning or excusing bad behaviour.
- It is not preventing the offender from facing justice.
- Sometimes this is the only and the best path for the person.
- Lessons can be learned. Others can be protected.
- Taking the person off your hook and placing them on God's hook.
- This is not being weak or a doormat!

Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. 1st Pet. 2:23 (NKJ)

Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord. Rom. 12:19 (CEB)

5. Forgiveness is not denying the pain you have experienced.

- It is not about stuffing your anger.
- Pain is God's messenger to us that something is wrong.

*** A further thought about emotions...**

- Forgiving is not dependent on your feelings.
- It is an act of the will. A conscious decision.

What forgiveness IS...

1. Releasing your resentment.

- Other words can be inserted...anger, bitterness, rage.
- Insert these words...grace, mercy, kindness, love.

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. Col. 3:13 (NKJ)

2. Surrendering your “right” to hear “I’m sorry.”

- This may never happen.
- Is the quality of your life going to depend on the decision of someone who does not care for you?

3. Subduing your desire to “get even.”

- We may temporarily feel empowered as we think of and plan ways to make the offender suffer.
- This brings no lasting healing!

4. The removal of negative thought patterns.

- In HD, slow motion we play the video loop over and over.
- The pain is reinforced.
- Forgiveness stops the rehearsing!
- It destroys the video and audio in our heads!

The results of forgiveness...

1. Forgiveness opens the door to God’s blessings.

- His forgiveness being at the top.

For if you **forgive** other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also **forgive** you. Matt. 6:14 (NKJ)

2. Forgiveness closes the door on Satan’s work.

I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. 2nd Cor. 2:10, 11 (NKJ)

3. Forgiveness is a true reflection of Christlikeness.