

Seeking God's Plan for Forgiveness The Challenge of Forgiveness

3 principles to help us handle the challenge of forgiveness well:

I. Problems Between People are Inevitable

A. Stumbling blocks will come – v. 1

skandalon – offenses, snares.

James 3:2 - For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

James 3:6 - And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

B. Failing to handle problems between people properly is a serious issue

1. Woe to him through which they come – v. 2

2. It would be better if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown in the sea – v. 2

3. Be on your guard – v. 3

II. Problems Between People Can Be Solved

A. Step One – If you believe a person has sinned against you, go and speak to him privately

1. But doesn't the person who sinned have a responsibility?

cf. Matthew 5:23-24

2. What does it mean to "rebuke"?

epitamaw - "to show him his fault"

3. Why?

a. Because your understanding of the situation may be incorrect

b. Because the other person may not realize he sinned against you

c. Because you may have sinned during the interchange as well and you will also have to address that part of the problem

4. One other caveat

1 Peter 4:8 - Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

B. Step Two - If he repents, forgive him

1. A word to those on the other side of the equation

Proverbs 12:15 - The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Proverbs 17:10 - *A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.*

2. What is forgiveness?

A three-fold promise:

- 1) I will not bring it up behind your back
- 2) I will not bring it up to your face
- 3) I will not dwell on it

Psalms 103:12 - *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

3. Does this mean that forgiveness is conditional?

4. Is it OK if I forgive the person but then refuse to have anything to do with them again?

5. Is it OK to make the person wait a while before I forgive them?

Mark 11:25 - *Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.*

6. What should a person do in the meantime if a person they've rebuked will not repent?

a. Cultivate a "forgiving spirit"

Luke 23:34 - *But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

b. Get others involved if necessary and appropriate

cf. Matthew 18:15-18

7. What if I have taken all these steps but the other person is no longer interested in the relationship?

Romans 12:18 - *If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*

C. Be prepared to do this as many times as necessary

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

III. Problems Between People Must be Solved

A. The apostles' question about faith

B. The Lord's answer about obedience

Romans 10:9-10 - *that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

1 John 2:3 - *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

Proverbs 10:8 - *The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined.*