

Day 10: Forgiveness

Definition: The action or process of forgiving or being forgiven.

Read: Matthew 27

Written by Jake Andrews

Before I found Jesus, my life was a wreck. I hurt a lot of people whom I loved. What's even more shameful is that I knew I was doing it but didn't care. However, by the grace of God, I met Jesus for the first time in my living room. It was a normal night for me, but something pulled me to open up the Bible that was sitting on the table collecting dust.

I picked it up and randomly flipped to the book of Ephesians. I wasn't interested in Jesus at the time, but I kept on reading. Finally, I landed on Chapter 2, verse 8 and it read, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."* At that moment, this incredible feeling of joy came over me, and I began to weep. Right there on the floor, I realized that I was a sinner in desperate need of a Savior.

Immediately, the Lord healed a lot of my brokenness, and even though I was healed, I still had a lot of fences to mend. Part of my personal journey of following Christ was asking for forgiveness, not just from God, but from those I hurt the most.

At our next family gathering, after we had all had our fill of turkey, I found myself at the table with my mom, dad, aunt, uncle, and grandparents. All the people I needed to apologize to were right there. So I went for it. I shared my heart, confessed the pain I had caused them over the years, and asked for forgiveness. It was a life-changing moment. I didn't deserve it, but they gave it to me. Just like I didn't do anything to deserve God's forgiveness, He gave it to me out of love. It was His gift to me. That day my family followed the example Jesus set.

Just like I didn't deserve forgiveness, there is a profound example of a man in the Bible who you would likely say is unforgivable. He was expected to carry out the orders of his superiors without sympathy or compassion for the condemned. He was a vulgar and crude individual, for this was the requirement of a man who served in the Roman guard. He was the one

overseeing the flogging, torture, and execution of Jesus.

I suppose, because he had probably executed many criminals in the past, he became bored with just the routine of things. So, he decided that just death wasn't enough for Jesus. No, Jesus also needed to be mocked; Jesus needed to have a crown of thorns forced upon his head.

If someone didn't deserve God's grace, it would be this man, wouldn't it? Your perspective would say he is undeserving, but Jesus doesn't see things the way we do. He has a heart filled with unconditional love, even for those who do not deserve it.

After the flogging, torture, and mocking, the Centurion then led Jesus through the crowds of people on the streets. Regardless of the pain and agony that Jesus experienced, the Centurion still felt that Jesus needed to be punished more. He allowed the crowd to spit on Jesus, throw stones at Him, and ridicule Him by any means they felt necessary. He didn't put a stop to it because he enjoyed the power he had over Jesus. He relished in the belief that he was the one in control of Jesus' fate. He was proud to make a statement on behalf of his superiors. However, Jesus was about to make a statement of His own. Jesus was about to save the very Centurion who was the cause of his misery.

Once on the hill where Jesus was to die, before the Centurion laid Jesus out on a cross, the Centurion and his companions ripped off His garments. Then they cast lots to see who got to collect the pieces Jesus' clothing. The mocking still continued. Once the nails had been driven through His hands and feet, they hoisted up the cross and began to watch Jesus die.

Jesus never retaliated toward them. In fact, Jesus prayed for them in spite of His circumstance. He lifted His head toward the sky and prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Yes, Jesus was praying for the very people who flogged, mocked, tortured and executed him. Jesus had the capability to send Heaven's Army of Angels, but he hung on the cross because He had been sent for a purpose. He took on my sin, your sin, and the sin of the Centurion. In the heart of Jesus, His desire was that ALL should know His love one day.

Toward the end of Jesus' life, the sky above Him turned dark, and after a few more hours of agony, Jesus uttered the words, "*It is finished,*" and took His last breath. The Centurion grabbed a spear and shoved it into the side

of Jesus, to ensure that He was dead.

Then, suddenly, an earthquake rattled the city, and the veil of the temple tore in two. After this is when, the Centurion, the man you would consider a lost cause, actually met Jesus for the first time. The Centurion fell on his face at the foot of the cross and began to worship Jesus. He declared with his mouth, "*Surely he was the Son of God.*"

Despite who this man was, Jesus saw him for who he could come to be. He saw this man as His child and wanted to show him the love, grace, and mercy that only a great Father could.

Take a few moments to answer the following questions. Remember, these questions are designed to challenge you and will do so only if you are completely honest with yourself.

Reflection

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to forgive those who were crucifying Him? Do you think it was a difficult thing to do? If so, why?
2. Is there someone in your life who has sinned against you in a way that has profoundly affected you?
3. Have you chosen to forgive that person? Why, or why not?
4. What benefits do you see for not forgiving them?

God is great, and regardless of where you have been, what you have done, or who you are, Jesus still has room for you in His kingdom. He even has a place for the one who sinned against you. Offering forgiveness to someone will not only set you free from the pain they have caused, but you will demonstrate the love, grace, and mercy they so desperately need. Let your light shine before others by setting the example of forgiveness that Jesus set for you.

The Challenge

1. Think about this one. Write a detailed journal entry about someone who has sinned against you whom you have not yet forgiven. Express how they hurt you, how it has affected you, and why you haven't forgiven this person.
2. Pray that God would give you the ability to forgive that person. If you ask, He will. Then choose to forgive them. Let it go.

If you chose to forgive that person, reach out to them. Talk to them about

how they hurt you, then communicate that you have forgiven them. Hopefully, this will open the door for reconciliation.

A word of caution. If you have the conversation with the person and they don't respond well, still choose to forgive them. Sometimes we have to forgive people who are not sorry for the things they have done. If we choose not to forgive, it can cause anger and bitterness. This is why we are called to forgive others just as Christ has forgiven us (see Ephesians 4:32).

End of Day Reflection

1. How did this challenge make you shine?
2. What was the most difficult part of this challenge for you?
3. What was the most rewarding part of this challenge for you?
3. How do you feel this challenge grew your relationship with Jesus?
4. How can you use what you learned through this challenge to shine daily?