

STUDY II

Battle Tactic: Freedom Through Forgiving

MATTHEW 18:21-35; 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5;
2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11

A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits.

—HANNAH MORE

The young man in my office had staked out his claim. He was going home to confront his father and see who was really in control of the house. I probed gently, seeing deep pain embedded in their relationship. I decided to come at it directly and asked him, “Have you ever considered forgiving your father?”

“No, and I don’t want to,” he curtly replied.

In a sense I knew that his spiritual struggle would not be finished until he was able to honestly face and release the anger and hurt that had become his comfortable companions.

Forgiving those who have hurt us is a topic that is often neglected in churches today. We live in a revenge-dominated society that would rather settle things through a lawsuit than

through Christian forgiveness, and Satan wants to keep us divided. Yet who of us has not experienced the exuberant joy and freedom when we have been forgiven and a relationship has been made right? Forgiveness needs to be restored to its rightful place as one of the most important and powerful spiritual weapons in the Christian’s arsenal.

1. What do you think it means to forgive someone who has hurt you?

READ MATTHEW 18:21-35.

2. Peter was possibly expecting praise for his generous attitude, since to forgive someone seven times would have been exceeding the religious requirements of the day (verse 21). What was the gist of Jesus’ response to Peter’s question?

How do you think Peter may have felt as he listened to Jesus’ story?

- ✎ 3. What steps did the master take to forgive the huge debt the servant owed?
- ✎ 4. What kept the ungrateful servant from forgiving the man who owed him one hundred denarii?
- ✎ 5. A popular idea in our churches today is that forgiveness means forgetting. In this story, however, the master did not forget the debt—he even resurrected it! Is this true forgiveness? Discuss.
6. How does our vertical relationship with God relate to our horizontal relationships with others (verses 32-33)?

7. Think of a time when you acted like the ungrateful servant or when someone acted that way toward you. How did you feel? How did you deal with it?

- ✎ 8. Why is it so important for us to forgive those who “owe” us?

Should there be any limitations on our forgiveness of others? Explain.

**READ 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5 AND
2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11.**

- ✎ 9. Forgiveness affects us not only personally but also corporately. How did church discipline and forgiveness work together in this situation in the Corinthian church?

10. What was the basis of Paul's call to the Corinthians to forgive the man in this incident (2 Corinthians 2:6-7)?

11. A spirit of unforgiveness often comes from our own weaknesses. What more did Paul recognize as being part of the church's struggle in this situation (2 Corinthians 2:11)?

12. What are some advantages Satan gains when Christians do not forgive each other?

In what ways might this apply to you right now?