

**Me Forgive? What's my motivation?  
Matt 18:15-22, Matt 6:9-15, Eph4:32**

Brothers and sisters if you've ever spent any time taking care of some kids you know that it is inevitable that there will eventually be some sort of disagreement, argument or fight and you as the caretaker or parent will have to step in a sort things out.

And in my family it went something like this – Mom Grant hit me....Yeah well she stole my lego and wrecked my fort...yeah well he slammed the door in my face and wouldn't let me play with him... until my mom would come out of the kitchen stop us both in mid-sentence and put her hands on her hips and say well, you both need to apologize to each other and forgive each other.

Then my sister and I would face each other with sullen faces because the last thing in the world we wanted to do was to apologize and forgive, we wanted to see each other get in trouble.

So my mom would wait as we stared each other down, and then she would say well if you don't apologize and forgive each other you're both going to get a spanking! That usually brought up a mumbled "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" from us and my Mom would have to say "I'm sorry I didn't hear that, can you say it louder and like you mean it!"

We've all been there as kids haven't we – whether it was with our siblings, a friend or a cousin, we've been in that situation where an adult had to come in and tell us – say you're sorry and forgive the other person – and we do it even though we don't feel like it.

And we were raised this way, and we continue to raise our kids this way because it is how we learn the necessary skills to have mature healthy relationships as adults.

So that when, as adults – when we offend or become offended, or when we get hurt by or hurt others we have the internal motivation to apologize and forgive – because that's the right thing to do.

But I'm wondering is if simply having been raised to know that apologizing and forgiving is the right thing to do is working for you - and helping you avoid Satan's trap of getting you all offended when other people sin against you?

Brothers and sisters – It is inevitable that other people – your friends, your family, your spouse, and especially your fellow Christians, are going to do things which offend you – they will sin against you - and you will also sin against them.

So have you been able to overcome these offences in your life simply by knowing that the right thing to do is to forgive?

I think that on the surface we try to act like that, because it's the right thing to do and we're mature adults now, and furthermore we are Christians.

So we say the words – I forgive you, I forgive them – and we do a much better job of sounding sincere than what we did when we were six.

Or maybe we act like we haven't been offended at all and we try to ignore the offence and not deal with it, we say it was no big deal, or that we're over it now, water under the bridge.

But there might just be a couple problems here. First – just because we sound sincere might not mean that we are. And second – maybe we are being sincere, but in spite of that we're not experiencing the reality of forgiveness in our lives and there are other clues that reveal that we are still bound up in the offense that was committed against us.

We might be triggered and have angry outbursts about related situations, we might withdraw ourselves from certain people, we might be feeling all sorts of emotions inside still – do you know what I'm talking about here?

Because ignoring an offence doesn't really make it go away, it's still there waiting to bait us. And even if we try deal with it...there are times someone has hurt us so badly that even if we sincerely wanted to forgive them, what they did keeps

coming back to haunt us and bringing back that anger and hurt, and it seems impossible to even deal with it.

But tonight on Good Friday – as we commemorate the work of Christ on the cross, I believe that God wants to deal with this issue of our forgiveness because its so intimately tied to our experience of His forgiveness.

Not only to experience the freedom and blessing in your life that God intends to give you through Christ, that blessing which makes Good Friday Good, but also and equally as important so that we can prevent the enemy from destroying the blessing which God is bringing out through us at Valleyview.

God has done a lot of good this past year in us and through us and the enemy wants to stop that - and the easiest way for him to do so is to trap us in becoming offended with each other when we sin against each other, and disrupting the relationship we have with each other.

And the only way out of such a situation is through – forgiveness.

So what better time to look at our motivation for forgiving others than on Good Friday and to allow the significance of this day to be used by the Holy Spirit to get back to a place where we can truly forgive others when God rightfully becomes the center of our focus once again.

Psalm 25:15 says *“My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare.”*

Brothers and sisters God is the only one who can set us free from the trap of Satan when we’ve taken his bait of offence. That’s why David says my eyes are “ever” on him – he is “always” looking to God because there are so many opportunities for people to sin against him, for him to be taken in by the bait of being offended.

Let’s just reflect for a moment on a life 100% focused on God – imagine your life being 100% focused on God

It would'nt necessarily mean that you go off to a monastery or find a tribe in the jungle who has never read the bible. But it would mean that you are totally in love with God and that love kind of spills over into other areas of your life making it easier to forgive others...

However, the truth is we typically tend to focus on the things which distract us from God, and we get bogged down in the details of daily living, and especially about how someone has done us wrong and how we've been offended by it – and often rightfully so!

So if you are struggling with this, let me encourage you to engage in activities which refocus us on God. Looking at God's creativity in creation, reading about his awesome power, experiencing his majesty and glory as we pray to Him and worship Him, – meditate on how He is beyond our understanding - being outside of time and space with no end and no beginning, and soon it will lift us away from the everyday and give us perspective about how petty and minor

most things in life really are – including what's been done to us.

But that perspective will also include coming to understand how we ourselves appear to God – and the scripture is full of instances where people who are focused on God write about coming to see themselves from God's perspective – and they see the truth about themselves as well.

So David writes in Psalm 51: 4-5 *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*

And Paul writes in Romans 3:11-12 *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless;"*

And Jesus tells the parable about a tax collector who goes to the temple to pray and cries out to God *“Have mercy on me a sinner!”*

So when you are 100% focused on God, you gain perspective and realize that you – like the writers of the bible – are a sinner before Him in need of his mercy and forgiveness. And the good news is that God is loving and he is willing to give mercy and forgiveness – and what day is more focused on this than Good Friday?!

Psalm 130: 3 says *“If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness”*

So Brothers and sisters, this is our primary motive for offering other people forgiveness. We ourselves have experienced that deep, cleansing, relief of being forgiven by God and the gratitude and love that goes along with it.

And Jesus is counting on this as He teaches his disciples about forgiveness in Matthew 18, with regards to a brother – a

fellow Christian - sinning against you. Christ commands that the offended person inform the offender about what has happened.

So let’s reflect on that for a moment – what would our lives, our families, our church be like if we followed this seriously?

We wouldn’t let grievances build up and cause problems would we? Because we would be letting people know as soon as they have offended us. And we wouldn’t go to other people and talk about issues we have with someone who has offended us because we will be dealing directly with the person in question.

Nor would we speak to a brother just to let them know our nose is out of joint, and blast them out of the water to let them know how much they’ve offended us – no, that would only cause more offence.

Rather Jesus says *“If he listens to you, you have won your brother over”*

So that implies there is a relationship to begin with and your goal in speaking with them is to restore it.

But why don't we do this? – *could it be because we don't have a "Christian" relationships with each other?*

Brothers and sisters a "Christian" relationship doesn't exist because we go to the same church, or we both believe in God or we both like singing worship music.

It comes from knowing we both have experienced God's grace and forgiveness. It is a relationship which shares the perspective that we both see ourselves as sinners in need of mercy, sinners who are capable of hurting and offending each other – but also of forgiving each other as God has forgiven us.

How many people do we have that kind of relationship with? In our marriages, families, in our workplace, our community and especially here in our church?

This is why Jesus instructs the disciples to pray – *Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*

Christian relationships! And just to make sure they didn't lose the importance of that teaching – at the end of the prayer he emphasizes it again

*"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

It is really important that we understand this principle in order that we are motivated to develop "Christian" relationships with each other – relationships where we can forgive and be forgiven, where we are committed to take the steps to make this happen.

Now just to clarify here - Jesus is not saying that you must demonstrate perfect forgiveness to everyone or its tough luck for you! You might get to heaven and God says, sorry you forgot to forgive that kid back in grade six for punching you so I can't forgive you and you're not getting in.

What Jesus is teaching his disciples about forgiveness is that it comes from the covenant relationship with God which has always been founded on grace and mercy – and not on our efforts, and also anticipating how forgiveness will be fulfilled and sealed in His death on the cross

Therefore, it is not right... it is not in the spirit of how God works with us, that we presume upon God to give us the forgiveness that is available in Christ when we mess up, when we ourselves are not willing to pass that on to others when they mess up – even when they deliberately sin against us!

After all do we not deliberately sin against God too?

Brothers and sisters Jesus wants us to understand that in the context of our covenant relationship with God in Christ, we will forgo the additional blessings that come from God's forgiveness - the freedom, the joy, the peace, and so on - until we are willing to extend forgiveness to our brothers and sisters. That's what Jesus is saying to us.

That is what God wants us to confront in ourselves tonight as we commemorate Good Friday and thank Him for the forgiveness that has been extended to us from the cross.

Why do we forgive others? Because we know that we have been forgiven by God.

And what is the best way to appropriate that forgiveness in our lives and show that we have experienced it ourselves?

To extend it to others – especially our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ

May the Holy Spirit give us this motivation and help us to forgive. Amen