

Reflection Questions: ***Matthew 18:15-17, 21-35***

For the message, "The Cost of Forgiveness" given by Pastor Mike Ivancic
at New City Church of Calgary on June 4, 2017

These discussion questions are designed primarily to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life.

You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion.

To review the sermon, go to NewCityChurch.ca/sermons

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Matthew 18:15-17, 21-35

A summary of the sermon: When conflict happens between two people due to sin the two most common approaches that our culture often employs to deal with it is either by avoiding the conflict (silent treatment, withdrawal, minimizing the sin if acknowledging it all) or relishing in it (fighting, arguing, executing vengeance or revenge). Both approaches are not only utterly ineffective in addressing conflicts they actually fuel it even further.

Jesus' approach to addressing the sin in conflict, the way of forgiveness, is not only effective but can bring enormous benefit to relationships caught in conflict. Jesus teaches the first thing to do when someone has sinned against you is for you to initiate and go to your guilty brother/sister and "tell" them their fault. This explicitly eliminates the tactic of conflict avoidance. However, the context also challenges the opposite tactic of conflict incitement. The entire context is about humbly, lovingly, wisely, and boldly pursuing fractured relationships where sin has taken root. This is true whether one is the victim or the perpetrator (Matthew 5:23-24). Vv. 15-17 is the practical outworking of disciplining, supporting, holding accountable, helping each other repent and forgive. It is because dealing with the seeds of conflict in relationships is so critical (if unchecked it will inevitably grow) that we need help from each other to do the necessary work of repentance and forgiveness.

But how much and how often should we forgive? Jesus, using his common form of teaching through parables, provides a corrective to a view of forgiveness that seeks to keep track of how often we forgive. He goes on to explain the significant cost of forgiveness in terms of debt. Every sin and wrongdoing against another incurs a debt or a loss (e.g. reputation, opportunity, economic, moral, ethical etc. . .). As with any debt (big or small) someone has to pay. The two options are making the perpetrator pay (etc. . . slander, anger against, withdrawal, silent treatment, litigation, physical force) which can cement an already broke relationship. The other option is for the victim to pay. This is the way forgiveness. It also highlights that forgiveness always entail a cost (e.g. not doing revenge, not gossiping, not bringing up down the road etc.).

So how do you get the resources to pay it down? What do you need to get in order to give forgiveness? Jesus shows us that this is only by first understanding and acknowledging our own infinite debt against God the King (Romans 5:8) and seeing that Jesus dying on the cross represents his paying our debt when we never could. Out of mercy, pity and compassion he, the true King of the Universe, fully identified with us. His final words on the cross found at the end of John's gospel "It is Finished" can literally be translated "It is paid".

It's only by constantly applying the truth of this gospel of grace that we are not only commanded but also empowered to forgive others. It makes Paul's command "forgive just as you have been forgiven" and Jesus prayer "forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors (remember in the language of Aramaic that Jesus spoke the same word is used for sin and debt) that makes forgiveness and reconciliation not just a possibility but a joyful reality.

Bottom Line: Since Jesus our King at the cost of his own life forgave us by paying down our infinite debt (sin) against Him on cross, we are to willingly and freely grant forgiveness to those who ask it from us.

QUESTIONS

1. How does this text speak to your life?

- How are you challenged, convicted, encouraged, or surprised by this text?

- What are is your default conflict approach: being a conflict avoider or conflict lover?
- What is your biggest struggle when it comes asking or granting forgiveness? Why do you think that is?

2. How does this text speak to us as a church community?

- What would it look like for us a church community if we are to live out this text in our city?
- What evidence is there that reveals the approaches churches often use to deal with conflict are often the same as the world? Why do you think this is?

3. How does this text speak to our city?

- What kind of new life / future in Christ is this text calling our city to experience?
- Could Jesus' approach to conflict be appealing and desirable to our culture? If so, why don't we see more of it.

CONCLUSION QUESTION

What is the one thing you want to take away from this study to remember or to make a change in your life.

PRAYER

What are some ways you can turn what you are learning into prayer? List them as bullet points....

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- _____
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