

Do You Need to Forgive Anyone?
International Bible Lesson
Matthew 6:5-15
Sunday, November 20, 2011
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“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15—NRSV).

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“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15—KJV).

Jesus taught about forgiveness immediately after He taught the Lord’s Prayer, where believers learn to pray, “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (the traditional version). Jesus knew that some people would pray the Lord’s Prayer while nurturing hurt feelings and refusing to turn from anger, resentment, and unforgiveness. When unforgiving people pray for God to forgive them “as” (meaning “in the same manner and measure as”) they forgive others, God will answer their prayer by not forgiving them.

Jesus emphasized the truth about His followers needing to forgive others when He used the little word “if”

twice in Matthew 6:14-15. “If” you forgive, then your heavenly Father will forgive you. “If” you will not forgive, then your heavenly Father will not forgive you. Some, even in the church, try to evade the meaning and serious consequences of Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness; they even strive to give good reasons for remaining resentful toward some. However, in this life, an unforgiving spirit may lead to suffering a variety of diseases and mental illnesses that God may refuse to heal until the person faces the real cause of their problems and repents of their sin. God may discipline the resentful person by withholding certain blessings and opportunities. Jesus did not elaborate on the eternal consequences of not forgiving others, but He did emphasize that God will judge those who refuse to obey Him. Obviously, if God allowed some into heaven who maintained an angry, unforgiving, and resentful spirit, they would bring unhappiness to God, others, and even themselves.

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Thinking Further

1. In some places or parts of some countries, some Christians pray publicly before a meal in a restaurant. What do you think about doing this? What do you think Jesus would say about doing this?

2. Some have objected to saying the Lord's Prayer in unison in a service of worship. What might some of their reasons be for opposing the public praying of the Lord's Prayer in worship? What reasons might someone give for beginning or maintaining the practice of praying the Lord's Prayer in a public worship service?

3. In your opinion, what is the most important part or parts of the Lord's Prayer?

4. Some have argued that because God already knows what we need and what He is going to do that we should never ask God for anything, but only offer God prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

5. What might you say to someone who thought they could go to heaven even though they refuse to forgive someone who sinned against them but also repented and asked them to forgive them?

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