

Scripture Reference: Matt. 6:12b / vv. 14-15

Date: September 9, 2012

Title: "Forgiveness Flows Down Hill"

Focus: Love is a Christian's defining character trait.

Intro:

1. Why do we want God to see the best in us, but we are willing to entertain the worst in others? Why is it difficult for us to extend to others the very thing we seek from God ourselves?
2. God connects our relationship to Him with that of others. This is seen clearly in the issue of forgiveness.

Body:

There are Plenty of Reasons Not to Forgive

- The issue of forgiveness is tough. Events requiring forgiveness are often associated with deep *emotions*.
- If you have lived, you have been mistreated.

James 3:2 "*we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.*"

- The issue of being wronged is compounded by the inherent *self-focus* humankind possesses.
- Any action can be taken and perceived as being committed against us both personally and intentionally.
- In our struggles with forgiveness, in our estimation we have good, acceptable, and strong reasons for not forgiving.
- Some of these reasons *may even be valid*.

There are Two Reasons to Forgive:

1. God forgives

- This is a general truth about forgiveness. This is for everyone.
- *All sin is against God.*
- Even transgressions supposedly against us are a violation because of the value God places on people.
- Since God forgives, are we better than He to not?

2. Jesus Ties Forgiveness Received to Forgiveness Given

- This is a specific truth about forgiveness. This is for His disciples.

NOTE: Jesus is speaking to His disciples. He is not stating a general truth about forgiveness. He is teaching those who follow Him about God's forgiveness.

- Jesus ties forgiveness given and received together. The willingness or not a person has to extend forgiveness directly impacts the forgiveness he or she can expect from God.

- This is illustrated in the parable of the unforgiving servant. (Matt. 18:21-35)

Forgiveness is an Issue where a Disciple's relationship with God and Others Intersects

- Disciples forgive because they have been forgiven. (Obedience to forgive)

- Disciples forgive to the depth they have experienced forgiveness. (*Quality of forgiveness*)

- For those who submit their lives to God, there *is no* excuse for not forgiving.

- To the extent disciples cannot forgive, neither can they experience forgiveness.

Closing:

1. Forgiveness is a point at which people can experience a departure from their *normal* experience. They can encounter forgiveness that is born from above.

2. However, a person will only forgive as far as they experience forgiveness.

3. Do you extend to others the forgiveness you have experienced from God?