



Forgiveness of an Image Bearer

The Clearest Reflection of His Image

I. Since we are two sinners married to each other, we better learn to forgive.

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

—Romans 3:23

II. Our carnal nature is for revenge, not forgiveness.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

—Romans 12:17–21

III. Reflecting God's image calls for forgiveness, even to those who intentionally hurt us.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

—Romans 5:6–8

IV. Keeping lists to "justify" unforgiveness is not a principle from God.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

—Matthew 18:21–22

V. We deserve to die, but we receive new life through forgiveness.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 6:23

VI. Unless we have experienced forgiveness from God, it will be difficult to extend it to our spouse.

"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

—Matthew 18:32–33

VII. Forgiveness is that which gives life to our spouse and allows him or her to more fully glorify God.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

—Luke 15:21–24

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen a lack of forgiveness being detrimental to a marriage or family relationship?
2. Where might we be tempted to use the phrase "If you _____, I will never forgive you"?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and enabling sinful behavior?
4. Describe a situation where forgiveness truly set the "forgiver" free.