

Worship:

Battle Belongs - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A>

Way Maker - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0

Thank You for the Cross Lord - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMsihDoX3uM>

Matthew 6:9-14

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,^[a]
but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The Bible is full of keys, commands, instruction and encouragement on how to live life to the fullest – in blessing, in freedom, in holiness and in the power of the Holy Spirit – and every so often God really highlights something in His Word by saying it twice!

This is one of those occasions – “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

This is incredibly important – we have prayed it many times, and yet do we really understand deep down what this actually means? Jesus wants to make sure we get this, it's vitally important: if we want to have fellowship with our Heavenly Father, with nothing separating us, we have got to forgive others if we want to be forgiven by God!

A bit further on in Matthew 18 we can see that this is still a bit of an issue for the disciples where Peter asks Jesus: 'Lord, how often do I need to forgive my brother when he offends me?'. Peter thought that he was being really generous by suggesting 7 times! – But Jesus replied, 'Peter, I say to you: you've got to forgive seventy times seven.' I don't think for a second that Jesus actually meant 490 times then you can wreak all kinds of divine vengeance on them, calling down balls of fire from heaven to consume them on their 491st offence ... surely not ... no rather it was Jesus opening Peter's mind to countless forgiveness – to forgive and keep on forgiving!

The problem is, if we do not forgive others, when we ask God to forgive us, we'll actually be asking God for something that we're not prepared to give to others. That makes us hypocrites! When we do that, we actually trap ourselves in our own hypocrisy, we want God just to cover over all our iniquity, but we're not prepared to reach out and forgive others. God really doesn't like this.

After this little chat with Peter Jesus told a story about a servant who was forgiven a huge debt by the King. But this servant who had been forgiven, he refused to write off a tiny debt from his neighbour. The King got wind of it and threw the servant into prison and told him: 'You will stay in prison until you repay that amount to every penny'. Jesus said, 'His master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses'.

This is serious business, the Lord was warning: if unforgiveness is in your heart, you will never know true freedom. In fact, effectively you will be thrown in a prison, into a dungeon, a cell of your own unforgiveness - and, the Lord says, you will be tortured, the torturers will come to you. Now, I don't know exactly what that means, but I do know this: people who have unforgiveness in their hearts are tortured by their bitterness. Unforgiveness imprisons and tortures us.

The first person to receive freedom when we forgive others is us! We drop a huge weighty burden of anger, resentment and bitterness and feel a whole lot happier when we forgive.

Do we have people we need to forgive? Have we forgiven someone but need to continue to forgive when feelings, memories and emotions of hurt re-surface? ... The truth is we can't forgive and forget! This is a fallacy – hurt hurts, the past happened and people have made bad choices, mistakes and even purposefully hurt us – but we have to make a choice to forgive in the face of the reality – not in denial but in truth. We will actually never “FEEL LIKE” forgiving – it is a conscious choice to obey His Word despite of our own hurts but this will ultimately result in our own freedom and in His Healing! God doesn't change the past – He HEALS our past – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and lean not on your own understanding – in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths!” ... He is the Healer of Hearts!

This is counter culture! – This is Kingdom Culture – The world is obsessed with their rights and fight tooth and nail to be justified and receive what they believe they deserve – the truth is we all deserve death “For the wages of sin is death” – “But the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus” ... When we lay down our rights, when we give up our 'right' to judge, to be offended, to not forgive and through forgiveness hand our offender over to God's

justice – the Judge of all the Earth – we step up from the justice level that this world exists in and step into the Grace level where we are ourselves forgiven, righteous and free to live in fellowship and relationship with God – we literally place our lives (and the lives of those who have sinned against us) in His hands – and He is a Good, Good Father – there' no better place to be!

Finally – I must mention the very necessary act of forgiving ourselves! We mess up, we make mistakes and a lot of the time we can be our own worst judge and jury, holding ourselves accountable – even for years – for the poor choices or mistakes we have made in the past – we can imprison ourselves in unforgiveness because we just can't let go and feel we need to pay for our heinous errors! – This is wrong!

It was only through our college counselling service, after Emma's accident 3 years ago, that I realised I'd been punishing myself for allowing the accident to happen! I'd kept some very graphic photographs on my phone that I would see every now and again which lead to many flashbacks, nightmares and a huge amount of stress (PTSD). I had told myself that I just wanted to be able to measure Emma's progress and healing but sub-consciously the truth was I wanted to feel the pain and to suffer because I was so angry with myself – I was in a prison of unforgiveness! After learning this I deleted every photo which brought me back to the accident and forgave myself for allowing it to happen and over the last couple of years I have had no flashbacks or nightmares and I'm trusting in the Lord to fully heal Emma but also my memories!

Forgiving ourselves is to believe, accept and receive the forgiveness of God – It is to agree with Him, to believe, accept and receive the blood Jesus shed for us and know that His blood, His forgiveness is enough – His free gift of love!

The challenge this week is to spend some time with the Holy Spirit and ask Him if there is anyone you need to forgive (ourselves included) and to choose to forgive them from our hearts as His Word teaches us!

Be blessed, enjoy stepping up into the Grace Level in forgiving others and being forgiven by our Heavenly Father!