



Matthew 6:12, 14-15

A. Unforgiveness is like toxic trash filling our emotional suitcases. We pack offense after offense into our luggage and keep lugging them around (they only get heavier). Forgiveness, on the other hand, is a gift from God that releases us from the weight of relational failures.

B. Oddly enough, in forgiveness we are the one set free.

I. It's One of the Most Powerful Choices You Will Ever Make

A. When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount, it was as if He knew we would stumble over this part. You know, some verses in the Bible are hard to understand—this isn't one of them. It's simple. You forgive = God forgives. You refuse = God refuses.

B. Forgiveness is hard! (That's why it's a deliberate decision of the will).

1. It's easy to forgive *tangible* loses.

2. It's harder to forgive *intangible* loses.

C. Here it is: forgiveness doesn't minimize your pain—it MAXIMIZES your confidence in God to enable you to move past the pain and without the weight of bitterness (Gen.41:51). Failing to forgive is cancer of the soul. It will eat away at you a little bit at a time. And..if left untreated, it will destroy you.

Forgiveness doesn't mean:

1. *You forget their sin.* That's impossible. It does mean that you release it—you don't cherish it or hang on to it.

2. *You put yourself in a position to be hurt again.* Forgiveness isn't about promoting naïveté or becoming a sin-enabler (Rom.6:1-2).

Remember also... Sometimes God asks man to act on His behalf in holding people accountable. The state does so with law-breakers (Rom.13). The local church must also hold sinners accountable (1 Cor.5). In either case, personal bitterness and vindictiveness is not the motive.

II. Five Reasons People Give For Failing to Forgive:

1. The _____ is too big.
2. _____ will heal.
3. "I'll forgive if she says _____."
4. "I'll forgive, but I won't _____."
5. "I'll forgive him, but someone has to make _____."

III. What About Luke 17:3?

IV. Why Should I Forgive? Matthew 18:21ff

A. Failing to forgive will destroy you. Let it go to God. Give the grief of the offense to Him. Allow Him to take that burden from your shoulders so that you can move forward without bitterness.

B. The Creator knows that our bodies are not designed to hold grudges. So...don't!