

# Forgiveness and Mercy

Today we dive into the liberating power of forgiving others and extending mercy, just as Jesus taught. Experience the peace that comes from letting go.

## Introduction

We are continuing the series titled *Life Lessons: Following Jesus*. We are exploring the timeless teachings of Jesus and their profound relevance in today's world. In a society marked by uncertainty and rapid change, the teachings and wisdom of Jesus offer a guiding light, illuminating paths of love, forgiveness, and service. Join us as we dig deeper into the heart of Christ's teachings, discovering practical insights and steps to apply His principles in our everyday lives. Let's embark on this journey of faith, growth, and transformation as we seek to follow Jesus more closely and live out His teachings in today's world.

Forgiveness is a cornerstone of Jesus' teachings, offering freedom and redemption to both the forgiven and the forgiver. Today, we explore the power of mercy in our journey of following Jesus, starting with understanding the gift of forgiveness.

Let's start our talk about forgiveness and mercy by discussing the gift of forgiveness.

## The Gift of Forgiveness

Jesus' teachings reveal the transformative power of forgiveness, breaking the chains of resentment and fostering reconciliation. Let's read Matthew 18:21-22.

### Matthew 18:21-22

(21) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" (22) Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Jesus emphasizes the boundless nature of forgiveness, urging us to forgive repeatedly and unconditionally. This teaching highlights that forgiveness is not a one-time act but an ongoing process. Jesus is exaggerating when he says we should forgive seventy-seven times. What he is saying is we should continue to forgive without ceasing; just as God continues to forgive us without ceasing for all our sins and mistakes.

Imagine a friend who repeatedly hurts you with their words. Each time, you choose to forgive, understanding that holding onto anger only harms you. Through persistent forgiveness, you experience emotional freedom and eventually may see a positive change in your friend's behavior. There are no guarantees the person will change, but you will, and for the better.

Forgiveness breaks the cycle of resentment. By forgiving others, we release the hold that anger and bitterness have on us, opening the door to healing and reconciliation. When we stop focusing on what the other person did to hurt us and decide to focus on forgiving them and being a positive influence in their life, our outlook and perspective get better and we can better point people to Jesus.

It is not just about forgiving though, we must also extend mercy to others.



## Extending Mercy to Others

Through parables and teachings, Jesus teaches us to extend the same grace and compassion we have received to those who wrong us as God has extended to us. Let's read Luke 6:36-37.

Luke 6:36-37

**(36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (37) "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

Jesus calls us to mirror God's mercy in our interactions with others. This involves withholding judgment and extending forgiveness, reflecting the grace we have received. This is nothing that the Lord has not done and does not continue to do every day with all of us.

Consider a co-worker who unjustly criticizes your work. Instead of retaliating, you choose to respond with kindness and understanding. Over time, this approach can soften their attitude and improve your working relationship with them. Again, there are no guarantees that our positive Jesus-focused attitude will cause them to do better, but it may. In either case, we are a better witness of the love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Jesus whether they do better or not.

Extending mercy means putting ourselves in others' shoes and understanding their circumstances. It's about recognizing that we all make mistakes and need grace. For forgiveness and mercy to succeed in our relationships with others, we must learn to let things go.

## Today's Life Lesson: Letting Go

By releasing the burden of bitterness and embracing forgiveness, we experience inner peace and cultivate healthier relationships, reflecting the heart of Christ. Let's read Matthew 6:14-15.

Matthew 6:14-15

**(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.**

Forgiveness is a path to personal freedom and spiritual growth. Unforgiveness and hanging on to grudges are like having a heavy anchor shackled to you; you are stuck where you are and cannot move forward. Letting go of grudges and extending forgiveness allows us to live in harmony with God's will and promotes emotional and relational healing. We can then move on with the plan and purpose of God for our lives and live the abundant life He has given us.

Think of a situation where a friend or family member forgot an important occasion, like your birthday, or said something they didn't realize would hurt you, and it hurt you deeply. Holding onto that hurt only strains your relationship with that person further. By choosing to forgive them and communicate openly about how they hurt you, you not only mend the relationship but also relieve yourself of ongoing resentment.

Today's life lesson emphasizes that forgiveness and mercy are essential for our spiritual well-being. It frees us from the burden of anger and resentment and allows us to move forward with a renewed sense of peace and purpose.



## Conclusion

Forgiveness is not a sign of weakness, but a profound act of courage and love that mirrors the divine mercy extended to us by God through Jesus. Let's read Matthew 11:28-30:

Matthew 11:28-30

(28) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus teaches us that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. He is not asking us to do anything he hasn't done by forgiving others, even before they ask for forgiveness. He is also teaching us that it is easier than we make it. We need to simply let go of the hurt feelings and resentment.

As we learn to forgive and show mercy, we not only align ourselves with Jesus' teachings but also open the door to personal transformation. Let us embrace forgiveness and mercy in our daily lives, fostering a culture of grace and compassion that reflects the heart of Christ. This is how we follow Jesus in our everyday life.

Join us next time as we continue *Life Lessons: Following Jesus* and discuss *Seeking God's Kingdom*.

