



Introduction

Mankind is capable of incredible acts of kindness and heartless acts of evil. Everyone welcomes kindness. Words of thankfulness are easily offered when kindness is experienced. But a Godly response to evil is more difficult to deliver. "An eye for an eye" was the Old Testament response to an affront. Jesus, however, taught that forgiveness is the response that God looks for.

This study will explore the ministry of forgiveness. It will challenge you to practice forgiveness as a way of relating to men.

Responding to Offenses

There are three ways to deal with offenses. Only one brings healing. Let's evaluate the actions associated with **Revenge**, **Separation** and **Forgiveness**.

Revenge

Revenge is a natural response to an offense. Revenge is paying back the one who inflicted hurt or caused pain.

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:18

- Circle the two things not to be done.
- Underline the type of response the Lord desires.
- *The phrase "against one of your own people" implies that it is all right to seek revenge against someone who is not one of your people. As you look at the following verses, answer the question: **Is taking revenge on anyone acceptable?***

Do not say, "I'll do to him as he has done to me; I'll pay that man back for what he did."

Proverbs 24:29

Jesus taught concerning revenge. He gave his alternative to the Old Testament remedy of "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth".

³⁸ *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'* ³⁹ *But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* ⁴⁰ *And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.* ⁴¹ *If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*

Matthew 5:38-41

- Circle how are we to respond to someone who does evil to us (verse 38).
- *Forgiveness is the underlying quality that allows a person to suffer wrong at the hands of another and not respond in a like manner.*
- ***What do you think: Is "resisting an evil person" the same as revenge?***

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- **Forgiveness:** One person's moral response to another's injustice
- **Reconciliation:** Two parties coming together in mutual respect

When a wrong has occurred, forgiveness always precedes reconciliation, but does not guarantee it.

The Never Ending Cycle

When revenge is utilized as a means of responding to a wrong, a similar response from the recipient is almost guaranteed. Thus, one side pays back the other in wearisome succession. The revenge never ends.

The way of forgiveness ends the cycle of retribution.

Paul quoted Solomon as he expanded on the reason for not seeking revenge.

¹⁹ *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.* ²⁰ *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."

²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:19-21

- Underline the command in verse 19.
- Circle the person who promises to avenge and repay in verse 19.
- Draw a box around the actions we are to take instead of revenge.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Separation

The second way that people handle an offense is to separate themselves from the one who hurt them. Separation can include actions such as

- Not talking to them any more
- Removing yourself from physical contact
- Moving to a different location

Using separation as a methodology for dealing with an offense misses the heart of Christian living.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 12:16

- Circle how we are to live with one another.
- ***Separation is an opposite response to that of living in harmony. If someone has hurt you, what actions might lead to harmony?***

² *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* ³ *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Ephesians 4:2-3

- Circle the characteristics that are to be present in your life.
- Underline how we are to relate to one another in verse 3.
- Underline how the unity of the Spirit is to be achieved.
- ***How does separation hinder bearing with the failings of the weak?***

Forgiveness

The only healthy way to handle an offense is to forgive. Living in harmony with others rather than taking revenge or separating from them requires a forgiving heart. Forgiveness is a constant theme in Paul's letters:

Dealing with your enemies

There are other ways besides revenge to responding to people whom you perceive as an enemy.



Proverbs 24:17

Mathew 5:44

Luke 6:27

Luke 6:35

David and Absalom

Read 2 Samuel 13-14

One of the saddest Father – Son relationships in the Bible existed between David and his son Absalom. David's separation and failure to forgive led to an ever widening gulf of hostility. Absalom ultimately tried to usurp the throne from his father, chasing him in the wilderness, and losing his life in a battle against His father's army.

The technique of separation that David used brought hostility, not harmony.

Forgiveness is a better way.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
Colossians 3:13

- Underline what is to be forgiven.
- Circle the manner in which we are to forgive.
- **What did you have to do to gain the Lord's forgiveness?**

- **What should someone have to do to gain your forgiveness?**

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32

- Circle the qualities that need to accompany a forgiving spirit.
- Underline how we are to forgive.
- **How did God in Christ forgive you?**



The Necessity of Forgiveness

It is God's design to remake each Disciple into the likeness of the Lord Jesus. Because Jesus taught about forgiveness, it should be no surprise that He wants us to practice forgiveness. But his greatest message was his own example.

³³ *When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals-one on his right, the other on his left.* ³⁴ *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*
Luke 23:33-34

- Circle the punishment Jesus suffered in verse 33,
- Underline Jesus response to their actions in verse 34.
- Draw a circle around the reason Jesus was willing to forgive them.

Peter explains the context of Jesus' forgiveness in a different way.

²² *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."* ²³ *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*
1 Peter 2:22-23

- Circle how Jesus responded to their insults.
- Underline how Jesus responded when he suffered on the cross.

What do you think is the connection between Jesus' forgiveness and entrusting himself to Him who judges justly?

Forgiveness is...

- ...Overlooking the wrong that someone else has done.
- ...Resolving to live with the consequences of someone else's sin.
- ...bearing the pain of the wrong you forgive.
- ...resolving never to use the forgiven offense against them again

Trusting that God knows how to bring justice to one who has done the wrong is a key to forgiving.

Solomon gives another reason to forgive

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Proverbs 19:11

- Circle the reward for overlooking an offense.
- *Forgiveness is implied when an offense is overlooked. Doing so brings honor to the one who forgives.*

The most important reason for forgiving another is the warning God gives to those who do not forgive.

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

Matthew 6:14-15

- Circle how your Heavenly Father will treat you if you forgive others.
- Underline how He will treat you if you do not forgive others.

To help amplify this teaching about the necessity of forgiving others, Jesus told a parable.

²³ *"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

²⁸ *"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.*

³² *"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*

³⁵ *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*

Matthew 18:23-35

Based upon the story above, fill in the chart on the following page.

Keys to Personal Forgiveness

Confessing our sin to God is clearly a prerequisite to forgiveness of our sin (1 John 1:9). In Matthew 6, Jesus makes it clear that our forgiveness is also dependant upon our forgiveness of others. In both cases, our failure to confess sin to God or our failure to forgive others results in broken fellowship with God.

Money Then and Now

When Jesus told this story, a talent weighed roughly 125 pounds or 56.7 Kilos. The value of one talent, using the current value silver (\$5.00 an ounce or \$175 a kilo), was roughly \$10,000. So the total owed by the servant to his master was \$10,000,000!

A Denarii was the wage a labor could earn in a day. Assuming a rate of \$10 an hour, the fellow servant owed approximately \$8,000.

Question	Verses 23-27	Verses 28-31
The debt amount?		
The initial judgment?		
What request did the debtor make?		
What was the response?		
Why did the master get angry with the servant (verse 32-34)?		
Why should you forgive those who have wronged you?		

Repetitive Forgiveness

When Peter heard Jesus' teaching he had a natural concern. What if I forgive someone and they do the same thing to me again. How many times should forgiveness be granted?

²¹ 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?"

²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Matthew 18:21-22

- Circle what Peter considered to be the maximum amount of times someone should be forgiven in verse 21.
- *The translation of Jesus' response is difficult. Some translators say "Seventy times seven" or 490 times. Others, like the NIV above, say 77 times. Jesus is not suggesting that when you reach a certain limit you can stop forgiving. Rather, the spirit of the teaching is to forgive as many times as you are offended. Don't keep track.*

Summary

For each section of this study, write a brief summary of the key thoughts presented. Try to limit your comments to the space provided. The benefit of study comes as you bring thoughts together in concise statements of truth.

Responding to Offenses with Revenge

Forgetting

When you forgive another, you choose to not hold their actions against them any more. You forget the wrong in the sense that you choose to no longer hold them accountable for the thing they did. So you may remember what they did, but you purpose to never bring it up again. For all practical purposes, you forget.

Responding to Offense with Separation

Responding to Offenses with Forgiveness

The Necessity of Forgiveness

Repetitive Forgiveness

Application

Write the full text of the verse you are applying.

State what the verse mean to you personally?

State what you feel your need is.

State what you are going to do.

State how you plan to check-up on yourself.

Don't Skip the Application
Applying God's Word to your life is the most important part of study.