

Number 491

Forgive Others As God Forgave You

Have you ever heard someone joke with their spouse after they got on each other's last nerve, saying, "That's number 491" — referencing Jesus' command that we shouldn't forgive someone seven times, but seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22, KJV)? When Scripture says love isn't "*resentful*" (1 Cor. 13:5), a more literal translation would be, "love does not count up wrongdoing" or "keep a record of wrongs." Forgiveness means doing our best to rip up the page where we kept track of their offenses.

We're modeling our mercy after Jesus' mercy as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Mercy comes when we receive God's grace, forgive others, show kindness, and develop patience. But how can we forgive someone when the wrong they've done feels unworthy of mercy?

What You Need to Know

God has forgiven our debt and paid the ultimate price for our freedom (Col. 1:14-16). Why would God do that for me? Mercy! "*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful*" (Luke 6:36). So, as God extends his grace to us, we're expected to mirror that in our lives. "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy*" (Matt. 5:7). Like the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:21-35), when our Master wipes the slate clean on our debt, how will he feel if we're not paying that forward to others? God's free gift inspires us to be generous with others.

So we follow Christ's example, as he hung on the cross and prayed for God to forgive those who tormented and killed him. As he prayed, he found compassion for them in their ignorance, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:33-34).

When we forgive, we compassionately release someone from their debt of guilt toward us, leaving their judgment to God, who will properly avenge wrongs as he sees fit (Rom. 12:19). But when we refuse to forgive, we're like a container filled with acid. And the acid we hold eats away at the container — destroying us! Our sense of justice can become twisted into a desire to cling to our anger and judgment over the one who hurt us — or worse, hurt a loved one — perhaps even wishing evil on them. When we don't forgive, we get to hold onto our rightness and their wrongness, an appealing prize, but the cost is too high! Not only do we become jaded and bitter, but worse, we wreck our souls, losing our ability to receive God's forgiveness ... until we learn to offer it to others (Matt. 6:14-15).

What You Need to Do

Audit your heart and your past, considering all those who have wronged you. Have you held onto any of those wrongs? Is there a brother you need to approach about wronging you (Matt. 18:15-20; Luke 17:3-4)? Is it time to let go of an old slight?

Pray for blessings and forgiveness for others, especially those whose wrongdoing particularly hurts or offends you. Take a cue from Stephen, who took his cue from Jesus, praying for his killers before he died, "*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*" (Acts 7:59-60). As a priest of God (1 Peter 2:5-10), you are called to intercede for others (1 Tim. 2:1), calling on God to bless (cf. Num. 6:22-27) even those who curse you (Rom. 12:14).

Then go a step further than praying for them, by doing what you can to serve them. "*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.*" *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom. 12:20-21).

Through the Week

- **Read** (Mon) — Matt. 18:21-35; Luke 6:27-38; Rom. 12:15-21; Eph. 4:31-5:2; Gen. 50:15-21
- **Reflect** (Tue) — Ask yourself, "*How do mercy and forgiveness liberate me?*"
- **Request** (Wed) — Pray "*Merciful Lord, please bless those who have wronged me*" (cf. Matt. 5:44).
- **Respond** (Thu) — If there's anyone you don't have harmony with, do what you can to reconcile (cf. Rom. 12:16-18).
- **Reach Out** (Fri) — Ask someone, "*What are the biggest barriers to forgiveness?*"