

The Power of Prayer: God's Forgiveness

Matthew 6:9-13

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven,

- 1. YOUR name be hallowed**
- 2. YOUR kingdom come,**
- 3. YOUR will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**
- 4. Give us today our daily bread**
- 5. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**
- 6. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”**

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Movement from material needs

(Provision)

to spiritual and relational needs

(Forgiveness)

**The followers of Christ
are a forgiven people
who are expected
to forgive others**

Matthew 6:12, 14-15

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

14-15 – “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.”

Matthew 6:12

- **NIV** - **Forgive us our debts** (opheilēmata), **as we also have forgiven our debtors.**
- **NLT** - **and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**
- **NEB** - **Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us.**

Luke 11:4

“Forgive us our sins (**hamartias**) , for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”

Matthew 6:14-15

NIV - For if you forgive other people when they sin against you (paraptōmata), your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins (Paraptōmata), your Father will not forgive your sins.

ESV - For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Three words used...

1. **Debts** - A metaphor for offenses that need to be forgiven.
2. **Trespasses** - a false step, a trespass of the boundary
3. **Sins** - missing the mark, failing to hit the target, not measuring up

Reality check

**Jesus anticipated that
His followers will
not always get it right
and will not
have perfect community.**

A daily reminder that...

We will sin and need forgiveness

We will be sinned against

and need to extend

forgiveness to others

**Jesus teaches his followers
to *anticipate situations* when...**

- 1. *They sin against God* (and need to receive His forgiveness).**
- 2. *They are sinned against by others* (and need to offer forgiveness).**

Two common needs addressed...

1. The need to receive forgiveness: “Forgive us...”
2. The need to forgive: “as we have forgiven...”

Two consequences

(when we fail to address these needs)

1. failure to *receive* forgiveness *results in* unresolved guilt.
2. failure to *extend* forgiveness *results in* unresolved anger.

Unresolved guilt and unresolved anger

**are physically, emotionally, and
spiritually debilitating.**

**They also easily multiply to other sins
because they alienate us from God and
others.**

there is forgiveness with God...

- **God described himself as,** “... compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7).
- **The Psalmist prayed and said,** “If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness.” (Psalm 131:3-4)
- **the prophet Daniel said,** “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him” (Daniel 9:9).
- **Through the prophet Isaiah, God says,** “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25)

there is forgiveness with God...

- **the prophet Micah asked,** “Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression...? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19)
- **through Jeremiah the prophet God gave the promise:** “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).
- **The apostle Peter said of Jesus that,** “... everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43).

I John 1:9-2:2

1:9-10 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.”

2:1-2 – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

The disturbing and difficult part of Jesus teaching

Q. Is there a conditional relationship between the forgiveness that we receive from God based on the forgiveness we extend to others?

Q. Will God withhold forgiveness from us if we refuse to forgive others?

Mark 11:25

Jesus said, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Similar challenges...

- **Matthew 5:20** – “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”
- **Matthew 7:21** - “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”
- **Matthew 25:34-36** – “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

We cannot *earn* God's forgiveness by forgiving others.

- **God *expects forgiven people* to forgive others**
(See: Matthew 18:23-32; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:13).
- **God's forgiveness of our sins is the *basis* for our forgiveness of others.**

Forgiveness is not...

- 1. Forgetting:** deep hurts can rarely be wiped out of one's awareness.
- 2. Reconciliation:** reconciliation takes two people, but an injured party can forgive an offender without reconciliation.
- 3. Condoning:** forgiveness does not necessarily excuse bad or hurtful behavior.
- 4. Dismissing:** forgiveness involves taking the offense seriously, not passing it off as inconsequential or insignificant.
- 5. Pardoning:** a pardon is a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of an action, such as a penalty."
(Adapted from Robert D. Enright, in Niki Denison, "To Live & Forget," *On Wisconsin* [November-December 1992]).

A classic example is found in the story of Joseph.

- Years after his brothers mistreated him and sold him into slavery, Joseph rose to a powerful position of authority in Egypt. From this position, Joseph had opportunity to confront his brothers and they said among themselves, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?”
- In fear, they came to Joseph and said that their deceased father had requested that Joseph forgive his brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating him so badly. “Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father,” they pleaded (Gen. 50:17).
- When their message came to Joseph, he wept. He told his brothers not to fear and they replied, “Asking the forgiveness of

In relatively recent studies...

"...social scientists are discovering that forgiveness may help lead to victims' emotional and even physical healing and wholeness. They believe that the personal benefits of forgiveness include release from anger, rage, and stress which have been linked to physiological problems, such as cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, hypertension, cancer, and other psychosomatic illness. "