

# Let's Be Free: Six Reasons to Forgive

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, please have a seat. If you are new here, you're certainly welcome. If you do not know who I am, my name is B.K. Smith.

I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here. And today we are starting a new series. I've entitled this series, Freedom in Forgiveness.

Freedom in Forgiveness. We're going to cover many different aspects over this following year on the subject of forgiveness.

I always say forgiveness is a little bit like money, right? We like a lot of it, but we don't want to give a lot away, right? We want to be forgiven, but sometimes we struggle to forgive those who've wronged us.

One author on the subject simply writes, Nothing is more foreign to sinful nature than to forgive.

[ 1 : 05 ] In fact, we belong to a culture that just doesn't want to not forgive, but that we celebrate unforgiveness.

Do you get that? If you doubt what I say, I have three words for you. Martial arts movies.

Seriously. Think about it. The premise, and I love martial arts movies, don't get me wrong. The premise of 97.9% of martial arts movies is the subject of revenge.

It's usually the story of one man seeking justice from someone who's either insulted their honor, killed their master, their father, their mother, their brother, their sister, their friend, and if you know the movie John Wick, their dog.

Don't get me wrong. Like I said, I'm not putting down martial art movies. I enjoy them. But if you are familiar with names such as Charles Bronson, Chuck Norris, Clint Eastwood, you would know that many of the plot lines surround unforgiveness.

[ 2 : 26 ] Movies titled Death Wish, Messenger of Death, Act of Vengeance, Forced Vengeance, Silent Rage. All these movies that we have in Hollywood seem to glorify Unforgiven.

They all glorify the lone man taking justice into his own hands and making the person pay who slighted them. The reason these movies do so well, because it touches a nerve in us, doesn't it? Makes us feel good. We believe in justice, right? We love justice. But sometimes we're not so high on the mercy. Truth is, we struggle with forgiving those who have wronged us, don't we? Some of the most common reasons why we are hurt is, one, broken promises. Two, betrayed confidences.

Three, personal rejection. Four, false accusations. And five, abuse. And as I've stated, what we see is what I call the forgiveness tension.

[ 3 : 44 ] What is the forgiveness tension? It's the tension that exists between justice and mercy. Mercy. When we've been wronged by someone, what do we cry?

Our cry is justice. I want justice. I want the person to pay who hurt me. But if I have hurt someone else, what is the cry?

Mercy. I cry mercy. Please forgive me. Ever notice when someone has hurt us, we want them to pay.

We want a satisfactory apology. We want adequate penalty. However, when we've wronged, we cry mercy. I had a bad day.

I was tired. I didn't mean it. Wasn't my sorry enough. The reality is we esteem mercy and forgiveness and we hold it up as one of the highest virtues.

[ 4 : 46 ] But when we've been hurt, forgiveness seems like a violation of justice. And there's no way God could be happy with that. So let me ask you the question or answer the question, which is, why is forgiveness so tough?

Why is it so difficult to give away? I'll tell you, it's three things. One, it requires us to set aside our selfishness.

To forgive requires us to set aside our selfishness. Two, it means to accept with grace wrongs done to us.

It means to accept with grace wrongs done to us. And three, it means we not demand what we think is our due.

Here's a question for you. Has not forgiving someone actually ever helped you in life? Has not forgiving someone actually helped you in life?

[ 6 : 05 ] All right, before I go any further, I want to define forgiveness. And I want to let you know where I'm going today. I'm going to go over basically six reasons why to forgive drawn from the pages of Scripture.

But before I do that, I want to give you guys a definition of forgiveness. And we're going to use this definition for the next, we're going to probably talk on different aspects of forgiveness all summer.

All right?

It's a big subject. And we've got a lot of Sundays over the summer that we can dig in. We're going to be looking at different books of the Bible that talk about this. So this is kind of the introductory message.

And I want us to really understand what the definition is. The primary Greek word translated as forgive means to send away or to release. When it's used in conjunction with sin, it means to pardon.

Ephesians 4.32 says, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[ 7 : 10 ] So we're seeing an attachment of forgiveness defined by how God has forgiven us. So the question is, how does God forgive? Well, actually, the Old Testament provides one, two, many wonderful examples.

But I'm going to read two of them for you. Isaiah 43.25 states, Jeremiah 31.34 says, With God, it's a promise to let go, to release the iniquity.

And what's interesting is that the forget is not a passive verb, but it's an actual active verb. It says, I will not remember.

That's how God treats us in our sin. Scripture uses many word pictures, and I'm just going to give you a few word pictures in Scripture that help us understand forgiveness.

It gives the picture of, to forgive is to turn the key, open the cell door, and let the prisoner walk free. Second, it's to forgive is to write in large letters across a debt saying nothing owed.

[ 8 : 58 ] To forgive is to pound the gavel in the courtroom and declare not guilty. To forgive is to shoot an arrow so high and so far it can never be found again.

To forgive is to take out the garbage and dispose of it once and for all, leaving the house fresh and clean. To forgive is to loosen the anchor and set the ship free to sail.

To forgive is to grant a full pardon to a condemned and sentenced criminal. To forgive is to smash a clay pot into a thousand pieces so it never could be put back together again.

And to forgive is to loosen a stranglehold on a wrestler's opponent. Pretty vivid pictures, right? But they all have that idea.

One, I will not remind you of your sin once you've been forgiven. I will not mention your sin to anyone else. And I will not allow my mind to dwell on this sin.

[ 10 : 05 ] So if you take a look in your brochures, your bulletins, there's some points that you can put in. I'm going to give you some of the words to fill in here. So hopefully it will help you.

So we're going to essentially look at six reasons why to forgive drawn from the pages of Scripture on why we should forgive. The first one is forgiveness frees us from our past.

Forgiveness frees us from our past. Guess what happens when we don't forgive? We keep reminding us, right? We keep remembering. And we keep going back to that time when we've been hurt.

It's kind of like an open scab. You know, like when I was a kid, I was a young kid. You know, if there was a scab on me, it would last forever because I kept picking it off. Kept picking it off. But it didn't ever heal, right?

And that's kind of what it is when we dwell on the hurts that have been done against us. It feeds our anger. It feeds resentment. And it robs us of a joy in life.

[11:08] I am convinced that many who struggle with depression and other ailments of the sort are those who have failed to forgive. They have allowed it to consume them.

Remember that word picture of a prison door being open when we forgive? They're locked inside of that prison. Trapped until they actually forgive.

To not forgive is to sentence yourself to a life of feeling bad, which will only grow worse over time.

Second one is forgiveness frees us from bitterness in our hearts.

Forgiveness frees us from bitterness in our hearts. The longer a believer dwells on an offense committed against them, the more bitter they will become.

Becomes like an infectious cancer consuming all areas of their life. I experienced this firsthand. I was a young man. I was 24. I was dating at the time and the relationship crashed and burned.

[12:22] She did something to me and I became consumed with bitterness. I couldn't operate in a proper way without bad-mouthing or saying something negative.

And to her credit, she came back years later asking for an apology. She asked that we could meet for coffee. And I was so bitter I wouldn't even do it.

I wouldn't even give her the chance. It wasn't until years later through a friend that I accepted her forgiveness.

Hebrews 12.15 states, A bitter person reveals his heart with their speech.

Bitterness is often cutting, sarcastic, and often slanderous. Bitterness distorts a person's view of life. Produces violent emotions, intolerance, and thoughts of revenge.

[13:36] For you who are married or have been married, you know this is devastating in marriages. And it's the reason why Paul commands husbands to not allow bitterness to take root in their marriages.

As one author writes, bitterness shuts off the affection and kindness that is so desperate and needed for a loving marriage.

The fruit of bitterness, sadly, is divorce. When we forgive, forgiveness replaces bitterness with love, joy, peace, and other fruits of the Spirit.

So those first two aspects that forgiveness brings us to, the fourth one is, third one is, forgiveness frees us from Satan.

Forgiveness frees us from Satan. What do I mean by that? 2 Corinthians 2.10-11 simply states, Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive.

[14:44] Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Satan wants to keep us in a spirit of unforgiveness. He's going to bring all sorts of things to your mind about how betrayed you feel, about how hurt you feel.

Often, much of the ground gained by Satan in a believer's life is through unforgiveness. Any counselor will tell you that those people who struggle over and over in life with spiritual warfare are often characterized by an unforgiving heart and have forgotten what saved them in the first place, a forgiving Savior.

We're going to look at this more closely over the next couple of weeks, but forgiveness leads to a hatred, and hatred is from Satan, right?

Forgiveness frees us to have a relationship with God. This is number four. Forgiveness frees us to have a relationship with God.

[16:02] Matthew 6, 14-15 reads, 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.

Today, Dave opened up our time with Matthew 18.

That is exactly the illustration that Jesus Christ himself was given. And I'm going to get into that in a little bit more. But we see here that it frees us to have this relationship.

An unforgiveness can ruin our relationship with one another, so can it ruin it with God. It is a serious thing not to be right with God.

It is like a parent and child relationship, right? God does not kick us out of the kingdom for not forgiving, but we can be estranged from one another.

[17:05] I usually describe sin to one another as like putting a big boulder between you and I. It is like this big boulder. And that boulder does not allow us to have a relationship.

But if I don't forgive to remove it, I'm now creating a boulder between me and God. So what we're going to be doing, so important, is forgiveness, that God actually devotes an entire book to this subject, which is what we will be preaching on the next three weeks.

And if you want to jump in early, I would encourage you to read the book of Philemon. We're going to be learning the story of Philemon, who was a Christian leader, who had a slave who ran away, who hurt him, named Onesimus, who came back years later.

And it's all about different aspects of forgiveness. The fifth area is forgiveness frees us from being God.

Forgiveness frees us from being God. What do I mean by that? Reality is, why do we act as if we can't forgive when God can?

[ 18 : 21 ] Think about it, right? Seriously, whoever has offended you has offended God much more, amen? That's a truth. When we don't forgive, we are saying that we actually have a higher standard than God.

You understand that? When someone is beyond forgiveness, we're saying our standard is higher. You offended God and he forgave you.

You offended me, so I won't. Psalm 51.4 tells us of a story of Dathan's psalm of repent after he had been confronted with adultery and murder involving Bathsheba and her husband.

David simply said against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, O God.

You see, to not forgive is to usurp the authority of God.

It's to usurp the authority of God. You are presuming that the sword of judgment is in your hand, and then it's up to you to wield that sword of judgment.

[ 19 : 34 ] How do we do that? We gossip about them. We slander them. We say horrible things about them. Sometimes you might even lie and exaggerate about them.

You see, when we do this, we do so thinking that we are God. The reality is we do not need to take vengeance. We are not the judge.

We do not have God's perfect understanding. When we want to take control of the situation by not forgiving, we are saying, God, you are too slow.

God, you are too indifferent. God, you are too unjust. Or maybe, God, you are too preoccupied. The fact of the matter is, God is impartial where we are not.

God sees everything perfectly from beginning to the end. The truth of the matter is, you and I can be really short-sighted sometimes, right?

[ 20 : 42 ] God is wise and good and perfect in holiness. We aren't. We're blinded by our sin, our pain, and our anger.

Because of that, we are disqualified from being judged. My sixth point, and I'm going to go on this a little bit, is that forgiveness is commanded.

Forgiveness is commanded. Open your Bibles to Colossians 3. Colossians 3.

Colossians 3 is very similar to Ephesians. And we're going to, Ephesians actually teaches the same passage, the same thought in Ephesians 4. But it's about our relationships with one another.

As we are one in Christ. So Paul tells us in Colossians 3, it's all about kind of what the world looks like and what we are to look like.

[ 21 : 48 ] And there's this vision of putting on clothes. You guys, many of you have heard me speak about this. And it's kind of like a uniform. I was just doing some more reading on it. One guy says, it's like putting on a uniform. It's letting the world know that we are Christians.

And it explains exactly what we're supposed to look like as Christians. And we see this in Colossians 3.12. It says, put on then. And it's actually meaning like a close.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts. Kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bearing with another. And if one has complained against another. Here it is. Forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Note that word, must. It doesn't say you can forgive if you feel like it.

You can forgive if they've paid you enough money. You can forgive them if proper restitution has happened. Nah. It says you have to forgive.

[ 22 : 53 ] And we read the same command, the parallel passage of Ephesians 4. Which says, be kind to one another. Tenderhearted. Forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Here we see forgiveness rooted in what God does. For us. In reality, the thought of a Christian who is unwilling to forgive.

Is actually unthinkable. You know that? To be unforgiving is to wear the clothes of the enemy. The uniform of the enemy.

When we wear the clothes of forgiveness, we're wearing the clothes of God. We're like a soldier. We're letting people know which side we are on. We are not to forgive others just as we have been forgiving.

To not forgive is a rebellious, open act of disobedience to God. Let me repeat that. To not forgive is a rebellious, open act of disobedience to God.

[ 24 : 09 ] It's no different than being sexually immoral. It's no different than lying or stealing. Even though we may think it's more acceptable to God, it is not.

As one author writes in the subject, as I stated earlier, forgiveness is the most God-like act a person can do. Forgiveness is the most God-like act a person can do.

How powerful is that? Now, I am not ignorant to the fact that what I just told you, for some of you, is really tough.

I get that. The reality is forgiveness is tough. See, forgiveness is not just talking about forgiving your spouse because they lost their temper at you.

For some of you, it's not like forgiving your sister who caused a scene at the last family reunion. For some of you, it runs so much more deeper than that.

[ 25 : 30 ] For some of you, the hurts that have been done against you form the backbone of your life and it's your entire identity. I'm telling you right here, right now, as a pastor, I know that.

Some of you have endured incredible pain at the hands of those you've loved, those you've trusted, people who were supposed to protect you.

For some of you, the pain has been so great that you've thought yourself to be a different person after. This pain is deep, it's intense, it's long-lasting, when you ask yourself, will I ever get out of this?

I'm here to tell you that myself, the elders, and Dave as the other pastor, we know and understand this. I'm not going to tell you that forgiveness is immediate.

I'm not saying certain things when I ask you to forgive someone. Okay? What do I mean by that? I am not saying, by asking you to forgive someone, that that person who hurt you doesn't deserve justice.

[ 27 : 01 ] Okay? I need you to hear and understand that. What I'm saying is, what they did does not make it right because you forgive them. Do you understand that?

I need you to audibly be with me on this. Okay? So, it means that they do not deserve justice.

Right? Right. It does not mean what, they are correct in what they did.

Right? But it feels like it sometimes, doesn't it? By, by offering forgiveness, we feel almost that we're freeing them from justice.

Or that we're saying that they're right. I can tell you right now, that's not what I'm saying. We are not saying that there are no consequences for their sin, nor does forgiving someone minimize the seriousness of the sin.

what I am saying is, we are commanded to forgive, and for some of us, it's going to be a lot tougher to do than for others.

[ 28 : 13 ] In fact, for some of you, there is no way to say, I forgive you, for the people are gone, they have passed, they are either dead or moved away, but you know there's a hole in your life because of what they have done to you.

However, as we go on in this study, we're going to see that forgiveness is not just tough, it's not just natural, but it's actually supernatural.

That forgiveness is a work of God in a believer's life, and that healing will never come through something we do, but it comes through what God does.

Because forgiveness has a cost. You'll notice at the end of your notes, I had put in there, forgiveness is tough, and the second aspect is forgiveness costs.

My friends, this is the Christian story. You know that? This is the Christian story. Our ancestors, Adam and Eve, walked with God, they knew God, they heard God's voice, they spoke with Him, and they ruined that relationship.

[ 29 : 37 ] One of the goals of forgiveness is to bring restoration and reconciliation. And this is what God does. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve broke God's law.

After we read that, God initiates with Adam. He explains the consequences of his decision, but that he, being God, will one day bring harmony back to man's relationship with God.

This is the Christian message. The Christian message is not that I am better than you, not that I am a good enough person, not that I need to make myself a better person to be accepted by God.

In fact, there is no amount of personal reforming I can do to ever be acceptable before God. In fact, our best efforts on our best days and our best works are always tainted with sin and therefore cannot merit God's holy favor.

In fact, it's impossible to be reconciled to God on our own. This is why we have the promises of Jeremiah and Isaiah, which I read to you earlier, that it's God who forgives us and God who will no longer remember our sins.

[ 30 : 53 ] For some, people think that forgiveness means to simply forget, that God turns aside or out of his mind our sins, but to do so would insult God's justice, his holiness.

The reality is if any peace is to happen between us and God, it has to be accomplished by God and it has to be initiated by God. One Christian writer states that God is not a reluctant Savior.

He sought out Adam and Eve in the garden. He came running to the prodigal son when he was afar off. Our God desires the relationship.

And in order to bring the harmony back to the relationship between God and man, God has to satisfy his justice. A price needed to be paid for our sins.

All of our sins. And only a perfect, unblemished lamb would suffice. Christ became our substitute.

[ 32 : 03 ] Jesus Christ on that cross died our death. He bore the punishment for our sin. God placed what was due us on his perfect son.

He became death for us. The judgment met for us was placed on Christ. God did something even more incredible.

He took the righteousness of Jesus Christ, his one and perfect son and he put it on us. Do you get that?

He put every righteous aspect of Jesus Christ on us and that's how he sees us. We were reckoned as Christ always has been. Sinless and perfect.

And this results in a changed life for a believer. This cost did God his son.

[ 33 : 16 ] So we now have a choice to forgive or not to forgive. And if you're not convinced at this, turn your Bibles to Matthew 18. I just want to go over a few more points before we close with you about what Dave read.

This is an incredible parable that Jesus Christ was teaching his disciples on this subject. So I'm adding a few more points to the sermon here and I'm answering the question, why is this important? Why is it important that we forgive? The first one is we have been forgiven much. We have been forgiven much, right?

Every sin is against God that we do. We've said that. As much as we are offended, I want us to take into consideration how much God is offended.

God is always the most offended party. And to explain this, he gives us this parable. So take a look at verse 23.

[ 34 : 26 ] It says, therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents.

All right, I'm going to explain the numbers here for you because it drives home the point. A talent essentially weighs 75 pounds. Okay?

It's 75 pounds. And back then it was either 75 pounds of silver or 75 pounds of gold. Okay? To get one talent, they stated, took 20 years labor.

All right? So for a normal man to save up enough, they believed it would take a normal average man 20 years of wages.

Think about that. 20 years of wages would be one talent. talent. This man owed 10,000 talents.

[ 35 : 28 ] So if we break this down, an average wage say is \$50,000. What this man owed was over \$10 billion.

Okay? \$10 billion. So we know he just didn't borrow this money. I was kind of thinking, how would someone owe \$10 billion?

It'd be like, I was kind of thinking, he probably worked for a guy like Donald Trump and burnt down all his hotels and then put nuclear reactive stuff in the soil that you could never use that property again.

Like this guy did something so great and crazy to owe \$10 billion. So, verse 25, and since he could not pay his master, ordered him to be sold with his wife and children, and all that he had in payment was to be made.

Do you think he was going to pay off that \$10 billion? Not a chance, right? So, the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, have patience with me when I will pay you everything.

[ 36 : 42 ] Yeah, dream big, buddy. And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him that debt.

So, why are we to forgive? It's because we've been forgiven much. But then something else happens. 28, and when the servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 denarii.

How much is a denarii? Denarii is essentially a day's wage. It's no small thing that he owed him. Probably owed him about 15 grand. So, here's this guy who's been forgiven 10 billion dollars of debt, and some guy owes him 15 grand.

I don't know, maybe he wrecked the guy's truck. Right? He burned down this guy's whole casino empire. The other guy wrecks a truck. So, what happens is, he had a lot to be forgiven, he didn't. You can't receive forgiveness that you receive from God, and not be unforgiven against the petty things that happen to you. And why? One of the reasons, if you're an unforgiving person, you will be alone.

[ 38 : 04 ] Let's keep reading here, verse 31. In this parable, his friends turned on him and reported him to the king. If you are not forgiven, you will have no loyalty.

So his fellow servants fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me, and I will pay you. He didn't. Verse 31, And when his fellow servants saw what he had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.

When his master summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me, and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?

And to not forgive means to invite divine correction. We read in verse 34, In anger, his master delivered him to the jailers until he could or he should, until he should pay all his debt.

That man is in there for the rest of his life. So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

[ 39 : 17 ] For some of you, I know you're asking the question why or how. But the next couple of weeks, we're going to actually break down the story of Philemon forgiveness.

We're actually going to look at how to deal with bitterness. And we're going to look at a few other aspects of dealing with forgiveness. So right now I'm going to ask you or I'm going to invite you to pray with me.

Because I know for some of you, this is hard. during the week, I don't want you to be hesitant to call your small group leader, to call the office, call for me, call for Dave, if you're struggling with this, because there is going to be a lot of struggles.

And through this study, I'm guaranteeing God will bubble up aspects in your life. In fact, it's bubbling up aspects in my life that I need to deal with.

Some are easier to deal with, some are harder to deal with. But I want to give you this guarantee. There is freedom.

[ 40 : 38 ] There is freedom from the hurts that have been done to you. Maybe not everything will be as it once was, but there can be freedom in forgiveness.

My prayer is that you will continue to join me on this journey over the next several weeks. Let's pray. Let's pray.