

Week of April 28, 2024

“Teach Us to Pray: A Six Week Exploration of The Lord’s Prayer”

Week # 4 Participant Materials: Forgive Us Our Sins – *Luke 11:2-4; Matt. 6:14-15*

Pastor Douglas Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church

Connecting – We’re halfway through our series on The Lord’s Prayer. Share one thing with the group that you’ve learned or appreciated so far in your time together discussing the themes: Father, Hallowed Be Your Name; Your Kingdom Come, Your Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven; or Give Us this Day our Daily Bread.

Background – Today we’re discussing the fourth part of The Lord’s Prayer, which is that our sins be forgiven, and not held against us. This is very challenging for most of us to think about or to practice. When we’re hurt, there is a part of us that wants to get even, to “pay someone back for what they did to me!” (If you don’t think this is true of you, just picture yourself driving in certain situations and see if anything comes to mind.) Jesus says that is not His way; it is not the wise, healthy, or mature path to take. Jesus would rather lead us down the path of forgiveness and mercy than the path of revenge, getting even, or insisting on being “right.”

Have someone in the group read these verses from *Luke 11:2-4* and *Matthew 6:14-15*.

He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. **And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.** And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

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

Discussion –

1. What did you think of the connections that the sermon pointed out between the Ten Commandments and The Lord's Prayer? If you hadn't noticed the similarity in how they are structured before (each begins with our relationship with God and then moves to our relationship with other people), what do you think we learn from the fact that these two foundational teachings have so much in common?
2. The fourth part of The Lord's Prayer contains a challenging truth: **we must forgive others if we wish to be forgiven; we must have mercy if we want to receive mercy.** A scripture that is similar to what Jesus says in The Lord's Prayer is **James 2:13, "For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."** Why do you think Jesus says that we're to pray that our sins will be forgiven as (or in the same manner, way, or degree as) we forgive others who have hurt or wronged us?
3. What do you think of the contrast between the two signs mentioned in the sermon: *"If you break it, you pay for it"* and *"If you break it, please tell us so we can forgive you"*? Which do you think other people would say more frequently reflects your attitude, perspective, or behavior in life when you're hurt or offended? As a group, what ideas do you have to help each other try to reflect the second sign more frequently?

4. 1 John 1:8-10 teaches that every human being has a need for God's forgiveness. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* How does this scripture help us experience the freedom of forgiveness?

5. Let's face it, **"To err is human, to forgive...is really difficult."** Charles Stanley defined forgiveness as *"giving up both resentment toward someone else and the right to get even, no matter what the person has done. Unforgiveness, then, describes a deliberate refusal to let go of ill will or your right to repay the offender in some fashion; it is based on the unChristlike attitude that somebody has to pay for the hurt."* Who is really hurt when we refuse to forgive someone else? If the answer is "I am," what do you think keeps us from being forgiving? Why do we hold on to "the garbage" in our life rather than letting it go?

6. What do you think of C.S. Lewis statement in *Mere Christianity*, *"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive. And then, to mention the subject at all is to be greeted with howls of anger"*?

7. **Read the following:** “Forgiveness does not mean that we will forget. Helmut Thielicke, a German pastor who endured the darkest days of the Nazi Third Reich, said, ‘*One should never mention the words ‘forgive’ and ‘forget’ in the same breath.*’ **We remember, but in forgiving we no longer use the memory against others.** Forgiveness is not pretending that the offense did not really matter to us. It did matter, and it does matter, and there is no use pretending otherwise. The offense is real, but when we forgive, the offense no longer controls our behavior. ***Forgiveness is a miracle of grace whereby the offense no longer separates.***”

While it may be too painful or personal to share with the group, if there is a person(s) you are separated from in life because of a failure or an ability to forgive, begin praying for God to give you grace to forgive him or her, so that you may be forgiven and so that you may be freed from the bitterness, anger, and resentment that takes root and grabs a hold of our heart and our spirit when we’re unable to forgive. Choose the freedom of forgiveness rather than the burden of paying back or “being right.”

“Forgiveness means that the power of love that holds us together is greater than the power of the offense that separates us. That is forgiveness.” ~ Richard Foster

Any final comments:

Closing Prayer: *Forgiving God, I thank you for your merciful and gracious nature and that you make it possible for me to be forgiven through Jesus your Son, my Savior. Help me to confess my sins freely and frequently, may I be quicker to judge or condemn myself rather than others. Enable me by your Holy Spirit to be a forgiving person, who extends forgiveness freely and genuinely. May our hands be used not for holding grudges or striking blows of revenge, but for embracing you and serving others in Jesus’ name.*