

**Following Jesus**  
**31, Just Keep Forgiving**  
**Matthew 18:7-35**

I. Introduction

a. Definition:

i. What forgiveness is NOT

1. Not something you can be made to do
2. Not a feeling
3. Not pretending something didn't happen
4. Not an automatic cure for hurt
5. Not conditional – based on earning
6. Not Forgetting

a. God cannot forget (He is omniscient)

b. But He can choose to not remember – **Hebrews 8:12**

ii. So, what forgiveness IS?

1. A willful choice I make

2. A promise to not bring something (an offense, a problem they caused me) up against someone

a. To not bring it up to you again

b. To not bring it up to me again

c. To not bring it up to others again

d. To not bring it up to God again

e. Forgiveness is a promise modeled by God Himself

i. **Isaiah 43:25**

ii. **Jeremiah 31:34**

iii. God makes a declaration: I choose not to remember how you wronged me

f. Remembering is the opposite:

i. Here is what “remembering” means: “I’m going to bring it up against you!”

ii. **3 John 9-10 remember his deeds which he doeth...**

iii. **Psalm 25:7**

iv. **Psalm 79:8**

v. Remembering holds on to a grievance TO bring it up

vi. **Forgiveness is a decision of the will: “I promise to not bring this up against you to anyone ever again!”**

II. Message

a. **Seek forgiveness when you offend others or God – v.7-14**

i. When we sin, we must seek forgiveness of God

1. Psalm 51:4 “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:”
2. “Is there anything for which I need so seek YOUR forgiveness?”
  - a. We should ask this of one another
  - b. And we should ask this of God

- ii. When we offend others, we must seek forgiveness from them
  1. The word “offend” is actually a helpful translation of this idea
  2. It means to “trip someone” up
  3. We might say: cause a problem for someone
  4. It might be sinful
  5. But we CAN offend others without sinning
  6. It is still appropriate to seek forgiveness
    - a. Sometimes we offend one another
    - b. We should be highly motivated to reconcile!
    - c. Matthew 5:23-24

**b. Seek to forgive when others offend (sin against) you – v.15-35**

- i. Notice the very clear process (particularly for believers, brothers)
  1. Go to your brother alone – v.15
  2. Take someone with you to help the conversation – v.16
  3. If a Christian brother refuses reconciliation, graciously make it public – v.17
- ii. **The problem – How many times?**
  1. This is our big question with forgiveness, right?
  2. How many times?
- iii. **The parable – How have you been forgiven?**
  1. You have been granted great compassion by God’s forgiveness
  2. You are to grant the same kind of compassion to others
  3. If you have really forgiven someone, it is not the seventh time or the fifth, it is always the FIRST!
- iv. **The point – How much do you benefit from forgiveness? – 35**
  1. God will withhold forgiveness
  2. If you refuse to forgive!

III. Conclusion

- a. The end-goal is reconciliation. Forgiveness is not an end in itself, but rather an important step in the process of reconciliation.

- i. This is what God does...Imitate God
  - ii. Forgiveness – **Ephesians 4:32**
  - iii. Reconciliation – **2 Corinthians 5.18-21**
- b. Questions:
- i. Are you forgiven? GOSPEL (repent or rejoice)
  - ii. Does anyone feel hurt by you? It is YOUR responsibility to go to them and seek forgiveness
  - iii. Have you been hurt by anyone? Just keep forgiving!