

Bible Lessons

Quarterly Lessons for Adults and Young People



FORGIVENESS

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

—Ephesians 4:32

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 4th QUARTER, 2026

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is essential for a successful and happy existence, both here on earth and especially in our eternal life. Forgiveness can also be one of the most difficult things to give, even though we hope to obtain it ourselves.

The four main categories of forgiveness are God's forgiveness toward mankind, mankind forgiving others, mankind forgiving themselves, and mankind "forgiving" God.

We will study the benefits of all four categories of forgiveness and the consequences, if any, of their lack in our lives. We will also look into how to obtain forgiveness and how to forgive. "To err is human, but to forgive is divine" (*Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism – 1711*). —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

LESSON 1: OCTOBER 4, 2026

SARAH FORGAVE ABRAHAM

Genesis 12:10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep,

and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

17 And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

20 And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Genesis 18:1 And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

(Also see Genesis 20:1-7 for Abraham's second similar offence.)

MEMORY VERSE: For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. —1 Peter 3:5-6

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Abraham conspired with Sarah to present her as his sister when they traveled to foreign lands because he feared he would be killed if anyone wanted to take her as a wife. Abraham carried out this plan twice, but both attempts failed to keep their marriage hidden.

Between the first and second episodes of concealing their marriage, Sarah called Abraham “lord” in her own thoughts. The occasion was when the LORD and two angels visited Abraham on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah. The LORD told Abraham that his wife would have a child. Sarah laughed quietly to herself, thinking she was too old to have a child. She also considered her husband too old, saying, “My lord being old also.” The Apostle Peter cited Sarah's calling her husband, Abraham, “lord” as a mark of godly submission, indicating that she maintained respect for her husband. Such respect would have been nearly impossible without her willingness to forgive Abraham for fearing that her beauty endangered his life at the expense of her own well-being.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 18:12 **Laughed within herself**: an involuntary reaction upon hearing news Sarah considered improbable and too good to be true, given her age (*Clarke*).

Genesis 18:12 **Shall I have pleasure?**: Shall I have the pleasure of having a child at my age?

Genesis 18:12 **My lord**: a respectful title Sarah gave to her husband (*Matthew Henry*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

It would have been interesting to have observed Sarah's reaction when her husband first told her they were moving, even though God had not yet revealed where they were going. Not only were they leaving familiar territory, but they could have also felt trepidation since they had no fixed destination.

Leading a nomadic life was not the only thing that could have troubled Sarah. She had no children and was quickly approaching the age when all hopes of ever becoming a mother would fade.

Being childless, however, made it easier for Abraham to carry out his plan to hide their marriage if threats against his life ever arose because of her. It would have been much more difficult for Abraham to claim that she was only his sister had there been children in the family. Any casual observer would likely have noticed that Abraham and Sarah both regarded the children as their own.

Abraham and Sarah agreed to conceal their marriage when it served their best interests; however, when Pharaoh took Sarah into his household and Abraham made no effort to protect her, it would have been easy for Sarah to view Abraham's love for his own life as greater than his love for her.

Despite leaving her familiar homeland for an unknown country, remaining childless into old age, and her husband claiming she was only his sister, Sarah maintained respect for him. Her attitude of forgiveness served her well. She eventually became the mother of Isaac, from whom the twelve tribes of Israel sprang. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is the likelihood that Sarah questioned Abraham's understanding of God's command to leave their homeland and journey to an unknown destination?
2. How valuable would Sarah have felt to Abraham when he first proposed that they present themselves as siblings rather than as husband and wife?
3. When Abraham received the rich bridal gift from Pharaoh for Sarah, could she have felt valued or betrayed?
4. Sarah respectfully refers to Abraham as "lord," even as she involuntarily laughed at the news that she would have a son. How likely is it that she would have respected her husband to that degree had she harbored bitterness when he received gifts from Pharaoh for her hand in marriage?
5. Abraham claimed Sarah as his sister for the second and final time when Abimelech took her as his wife. How difficult can it be to forgive someone you should respect and love when it feels as though they have betrayed and hurt you again?
6. How did Sarah's faith in God's providential care during her husband's difficult times help her maintain respect and forgiveness toward him?
7. What was Sarah's ultimate reward for her forgiving attitude and her trust in God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is certain that both Abraham and Sarah had the opportunity to be offended by one another and to harbor grudges as they embarked on their journey of faith. Abraham is known as the father of faith. His faith did not mature all at once, however. His path was not an easy one, and he stumbled from time to time.

Imagine the consequences had Sarah given in to her feelings when Abraham's confidence in God's providential care faltered, prompting him to claim her as his sister on two occasions. Would the Lord have been able to use them to fulfill His great plan, or would He have needed to raise up someone else?

"Dear Lord, help me to have the same attitude of forgiveness and long-suffering that Sarah exhibited. Amen!" —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

There is an old saying, "Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." It indicates we should learn from experience and not be a victim twice. I'm so thankful the Lord hasn't followed this adage but has suffered long with me. The Bible teaches a much more compassionate and challenging approach. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

It seems the culture of our world today is so harsh and completely without mercy. While acknowledging that there is a place we need to recognize patterns of abusive behaviors and make prudent decisions, it also does us well to remember character growth takes time. Learning or unlearning things is rarely once and done. "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Proverbs 24:16a). I believe Sarah recognized Abram as a just man, and while his decision to seek his own safety over protecting her may have been selfish, it gave her an opportunity to exhibit her love for him. Perhaps we could learn from her by re-framing those things we find hurtful or offensive into opportunities for us to reflect Christ's humility, patience, and forbearance with one another.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 2: OCTOBER 11, 2026

ABRAHAM FORGAVE GOD

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and

took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

MEMORY VERSE: By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

—Hebrews 11:17-19

CENTRAL THOUGHT

God told Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering on a mountain in the land of Moriah. The next morning, Abraham arose early, made the necessary preparations, and set out for Moriah. After traveling for a while, Isaac asked his father where the sacrifice was. Abraham replied, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Isaac accepted his Father's answer, and they continued their journey together.

When father and son finally reached their destination, it became apparent that Isaac was to be the sacrifice. Submitting to his father and resigning himself to God's will, Isaac allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar. As Abraham reached for his knife, the angel of the LORD called out from heaven, telling him not to harm his son. Abraham then saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham offered the ram as a sacrifice in place of his son. The angel of the LORD

then spoke a second time, renewing His covenant with Abraham. The Lord swore by Himself that He would multiply Abraham's progeny as the stars of heaven and the sand upon the seashore. He also promised that all nations of the earth would be blessed because Abraham had obeyed His voice.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 22:1 **God did tempt Abraham:** The original text states, "He tried Abraham." God brought Abraham into circumstances that exercised and discovered his faith, love, and obedience (*Clarke*).

Genesis 22:2 **Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest:** The Lord's description of Isaac was intended to leave no doubt in Abraham's mind that Isaac was to be offered as a sacrifice, not Ishmael (*Clarke*).

Genesis 22:2 **Offer him there for a burnt offering:** God proposed to remove the obvious means of fulfilling His promise without first nullifying it. This request was the supreme test of Abraham's faith, love, and obedience.

Genesis 22:14 **Jehovahjireh:** The Lord will see, or provide (*TSK Cross References*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

God promised to make Abraham a great nation before Abraham had any children. Because the promise seemed impossible without children, Abraham listened to his wife's suggestion to "help" God fulfill His promise. This decision led to great heartache because Ishmael, the result of Sarah's plan involving Hagar, was not the son of promise.

Twenty-four years passed before Isaac was born. When Isaac was a young man and Abraham was advanced in age, God asked Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. Abraham wisely chose to believe that God would still fulfill His promise, even if God had to raise Isaac from the dead. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why was Abraham able to pass the ultimate test of faith by being willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice at God's command?

2. How many years did God work with Abraham to develop the faith needed to believe that God could raise Isaac from the dead and still fulfill His promise?
3. How long did Abraham tarry and “pray about it” before beginning the journey to Mount Moriah?
4. What might have happened had Abraham answered Isaac any differently when Isaac inquired about the absence of the sacrificial lamb?
5. Why was Isaac able to submit to his father and to God when it became clear that he was to be the sacrifice?
6. How easily could Isaac have escaped from his father when his father finally told him about God’s plan to sacrifice him?
7. What did Isaac learn from the miracle of God delivering him from being sacrificed?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Abraham’s journey of faith is a shining example of what God will do for those who take Him at His word, even when it seems He contradicts His original promise. In Abraham’s case, God made a covenant with him, promising to make him into a great nation. However, the son God promised did not arrive until twenty-four years had passed.

Waiting a long time to receive a promise is one thing, but being asked to give it back after receiving it is quite another. Abraham’s son of promise, Isaac, was a young man in the prime of his strength when God asked for him back. At that point, Abraham had two choices: refuse to comply with God’s directive because God had promised a great nation through Isaac, or believe that God would fulfill His promise through Isaac even if Isaac were sacrificed. The latter choice would require a miracle Abraham had never witnessed or heard of before—raising someone from the dead after they had been burned to ashes.

The Lord exercised Abraham’s faith for a long time to bring him to the point where He could require the return of the promised son to Him without reservation on Abraham’s part. Abraham’s example of releasing all offense toward God and trusting Him, even when God seemed to contradict Himself, helps us surrender our questions and trust God when His ways do not seem logical.

“Dear Heavenly Father, help me to have the right attitude toward the ways you choose to perfect my faith. Amen.”

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Four years after my dad passed away, I was 20 years old and the oldest child in the family. During that time, I began to feel as though God was failing us. It seemed like my family was losing the structure and stability we had when Dad was there to guide our home. I was also struggling to know what vocation or career I should pursue without Dad’s guidance.

I eventually had to “forgive God” and commit it into his hands in order to maintain a healthy trusting relationship with Him. Thankfully, the Lord gives us time to “forgive Him” as He works our perfection through His agents of “sorrow and suffering.”

We are surrounded by, and have been preceded by, millions in this great cloud of witnesses who have sacrificed close relationships, family members, health, wealth, reputation, and their very lives for the love of God. Each one of them had to deliberately make the commitment that loving God was worth any sacrifice and to believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Their gripping examples of obedience unto death and unconditional surrender to whatever sacrifice God called them to, convicted both their unbelieving peers and fellow believers to fall on their knees and surrender their lives to the only true God.

God help us be willing to sacrifice health and earthly things to be made, like Jacob, a prince who has power with God. May we follow Christ’s call to:

*“Take up Thy cross and follow me,
I hear the blessed Saviour call;
How can I make a lesser sacrifice,
When Jesus gave His all.”*

—Bro Jeremy Booher

LESSON 3: OCTOBER 18, 2026

JOSEPH FORGAVE HIS BROTHERS

Genesis 45:1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

Genesis 50:15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

MEMORY VERSE: So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. —2 Corinthians 2:7

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Joseph forgave his ten older brothers for selling him into slavery. He told them that God had sent him ahead of them into Egypt to preserve their lives during the seven-year famine. After their father died, Joseph's brothers feared they would surely be punished for their sins. Joseph was grieved that they still feared he would seek revenge, and he again assured them that he held nothing against them.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 45:8 **Father to Pharaoh:** similar in office to a prime minister (*Clarke*).

Genesis 50:19 **Am I in the place of God?:** "Am not I a man also, such as you are? Repent before God, and you will find it easier to believe that I have also forgiven you!" (*Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph was seventeen when his jealous brothers sold him into slavery. Potiphar bought Joseph and soon promoted him to chief steward of his household. While serving Potiphar, Joseph was repeatedly propositioned by Potiphar's wife. When Joseph finally had to flee from her, she falsely accused him. In a rage, Potiphar put him in the king's prison. Joseph again proved his faithfulness and was soon put in charge of the whole prison. Soon after Joseph arrived, Pharaoh's chief baker and butler were imprisoned. Both the baker and the butler had troubling dreams. After hearing their dreams, Joseph interpreted them with God's help. Joseph asked the butler to remember him after he regained Pharaoh's favor. Alas, the butler forgot about Joseph, but God did not. After two years, Pharaoh had two dreams. He knew they were significant, but no one could tell him their meanings. The butler remembered that Joseph had correctly interpreted his dream and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh commanded that Joseph be brought before him. Joseph told Pharaoh the meaning of the dreams. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's spirit and God-given abilities that he made him prime minister over the whole land. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Joseph wept as he revealed his true identity to his brothers. What did his tears signify?
2. Given all Joseph endured because of his brothers' jealousy, how was he able to forgive them?
3. How was Joseph able to be chiefly concerned with his father's and brothers' welfare rather than focus on his own pain?
4. Describe the many events God orchestrated in Joseph's life that brought him to the right place at the right time, enabling someone in Pharaoh's court to recommend him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.
5. Each step in Joseph's progression toward becoming prime minister was marked by both blessing and pain. Of what benefit was the pain?
6. How was Joseph able to view his brothers' jealous actions as part of God's master plan for the greater good of all?

7. Why did it grieve Joseph so deeply that his brothers were hardly able to forgive themselves after he had forgiven them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Joseph had no idea what he would have to endure before the dream would be fulfilled in which he bowed down to his father, mother, and eleven brothers. After his brothers sold him into slavery, it must have seemed that God had forsaken him, rather than placing him on the path to becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt. Joseph held on to his confidence in God, though, and let Him heal his broken heart.

Because Joseph allowed God to help him forgive his brothers, he was able to maintain a cheerful outlook on life. With his sunny disposition and strong work ethic, Joseph prospered in the household of his master, Potiphar, and he soon became Potiphar's chief steward. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife took notice of Joseph too—but for all the wrong reasons. She began propositioning him daily. When she falsely accused Joseph and he was thrown into the king's prison, he had another chance to become bitter or to let God take care of it. Joseph chose the right path again and was soon put in charge of the prison!

After interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh's butler and baker, Joseph hoped the butler would remember him and secure his release from prison. However, two long years passed, and Joseph may have despaired of ever being released. In the fullness of time, Pharaoh had two dreams that even his chief wise men and magicians could not interpret. Pharaoh's butler then remembered Joseph and recommended him to Pharaoh. After Joseph explained the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams and recommended storing grain for the seven-year famine that would follow seven years of plenty, Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of the project that saved Egypt and the surrounding nations from the great famine that came eight years later.

A "secondary cause" is a cause that is itself caused by something else; a second cause through which God, the "first cause" works (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Joseph wisely chose to always trust that God was ultimately in control of both good times and bad. He trusted in God's love and power to ultimately triumph. He did not blame people or circumstances but understood that God was always in charge of the secondary causes.

“Dear God, help me always remember that you are the primary cause and that you are in control of all secondary causes. Help me to forgive those who appear to bring about difficult secondary causes. Amen.” —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Joseph was an example of having true forgiveness. He forgave his brothers from the heart. He had love instead of hate. This kind of forgiveness reflects the forgiveness God gives mankind when they repent of their sins. God forgives us and casts our sins into the sea, and He remembers them against us no more. (See Micah 7:19 and Jeremiah 31:34.) We receive a clean slate.

According to Matthew 18:35, we must forgive from the heart all who trespass against us, but true forgiveness can be hindered by our thoughts. Many people have said, “I will forgive them, but I won’t forget what they did.” We need to be willing to forget. Some may ask, “How can you forget when people have done you wrong?” It is not forgetting that the wrong has been done, but the impact no longer affects you; the wound no longer controls the heart, and the offense is no longer held against the person.

Forgiveness of this kind is what Joseph had for his brothers. He not only forgave them, but he loved them as though their sin against him had never happened. He was more concerned about their well-being than the harm they had caused him, exemplifying true forgiveness and forgetting the wrong.

The level of forgiveness to which Joseph forgave was no doubt the result of the Lord being with him throughout the thirteen years of his affliction. When we study the life of Joseph, we see that he held his integrity with God throughout these difficult years. Through this close connection to God came the ability to forgive, from the heart, the wrongs inflicted upon him. Instead of bitterness and a desire to get revenge, he had a deep love and compassion for his brothers who were responsible for the troubles that he had to endure.

I am convinced that today we can—and must—have forgiveness to this same level. We can so walk with God that He will give us this kind of forgiveness and love for those who trespass against us. The key is to walk close to Him and have His divine love dwelling in us.

—Sis. Doris Clay

LESSON 4: OCTOBER 25, 2026

MOSES INTERCEDED FOR THE PEOPLE

Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

10 Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

11 And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

MEMORY VERSE: Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin. —Deuteronomy 9:27

CENTRAL THOUGHT

After Moses delayed coming down from Mount Sinai, the people of Israel despaired of ever seeing him again. In his absence they demanded that Aaron make them gods to lead them. Aaron commanded all the people to break off their gold earrings and other

jewelry. From this gold he fashioned a golden calf and set it up before them. The people offered sacrifices, ate and drank, and then rose up to play before their new idol. Seeing this, the Lord became so angry with the people that He told Moses He would destroy them and make another nation from Moses' posterity. Moses pleaded with the Lord to reconsider. The Lord repented of completely destroying the people.

When Moses descended from Mount Sinai and finally saw the wickedness spread before him, he threw down the tables of stone the Lord had carved and inscribed, destroying them. Despite his great anger and disappointment, he soon returned to the mountain to fast and pray for another forty days on behalf of the people, pleading with the Lord to have mercy on their backsliding.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 32:7 **Thy people:** God spoke of the people as Moses' people, thus disowning them (*Henry*).

Exodus 32:9 **Stiffnecked:** severe, churlish, cruel, grievous, hard-hearted, heavy, impudent, obstinate, and stubborn (*Strong's*).

Exodus 32:10 **Let me alone:** Moses had already begun to intercede for the people. God honored Moses' intercessory prayer and pleaded with Moses to stop praying so that He could exercise judgment against the people (*Clarke*).

Exodus 32:32 **Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written:** Moses requested that his name be removed from the roll call of those who would later inherit the land of Canaan if God chose not to forgive the people for their trespass. God honored Moses' intercessory prayer (*Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Exodus 16:3, the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, believing there would not be enough food for them all, and said, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

The children of Israel murmured again in Exodus 17:2, “Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?” —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What must have gone through Moses’ mind when the Lord referred to the children of Israel as “thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt”?
2. The Lord told Moses, “Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.” Why did the Lord say, “Let me alone”?
3. How much power does intercessory prayer have, even when God has determined to exact severe punishment?
4. How effective would Moses’ intercessory prayer for the children of Israel have been if he had harbored resentment or unforgiveness toward the people because of their waywardness?
5. What is the likelihood that Moses would have agreed to the Lord’s plan to eliminate all the children of Israel and start over with his immediate family if Moses had not had a forgiving heart toward Israel?
6. How did the Lord view Moses’ willingness to have his name removed from the roll call of those who would inherit the land of Canaan for the sake of the children of Israel?
7. Moses was very angry at the Israelites’ quick descent into idolatry. How could he still forgive them and pray for God to forgive them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Paul Harvey, the late popular radio commentator, told a story several years ago about two mothers who, for reasons unknown to us today, were encouraged to abort their unborn children. The two mothers decided against the advice and kept their children, which changed world history. One of the women became the mother of Michelangelo, the artist who later painted the interior of the Sistine Chapel. The other woman became Adolf Hitler's mother.

If Moses had not forgiven the children of Israel and pleaded with God to forgive them, history would have unfolded very differently. Some ungodly men, such as Nabal, would never have appeared; but neither would many faithful servants of God. We would also have missed out on all the good God wrought through Joshua, Caleb, David, and Solomon. The beautiful story of Ruth might never have come about. The books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon—all but the first five books of the Bible—would not exist. None of the New Testament would have been written either. God could have raised up others to fulfill His purposes, but it is striking to consider how much of biblical history came through the nation for which Moses prayed. It is also interesting to note that only three of Moses' direct descendants are accounted in the Bible: Jonathan, a grandson of Moses, became a pagan priest, according to the account in Judges 18:30. Shebuel, Moses' great-grandson, became the chief treasury officer of the temple, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 26:24. Several generations later, Shelomith was charged with the treasures for the dedicated things, as written in 1 Chronicles 26:25-26.

"Dear Heavenly Father, help me to forgive so I can plead the cause of those who need your mercy! Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

I am challenged by the description of Moses in Numbers 12:3: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."

One definition of meek is, "not proud or self-sufficient." From the time Moses met God at the burning bush, he felt his lack of ability.

After God outlined the job ahead, Moses looked at his ability and said in Exodus 4:10, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

Moses did not say, "You picked the right man for this job." He did not feel self-sufficient or self-important.

When Moses took on the task, he had a heart for the people and their distress.

Hebrews 11:24-25 shows the concern Moses had for the children of Israel: "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”

Moses laid aside his comforts and sacrificed himself for the benefit of the children of Israel. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” John 12:24. His willingness to sacrifice showed how deeply he cared about the well-being of the people.

Now comes God’s offer to Moses: “Let me alone... that I may consume them and make of thee a great nation” Exodus 32:10.

Moses could have said, “It’s about time! I’ve had it with this people; I deserve better.” Instead, he was willing to entreat the LORD to spare them even though it would be a hardship for him. “Choosing rather...”

Lord, help me that I would be more desirous that mercy be extended to the lost.

Abraham demonstrated this same mercy when he pleaded, “If there be ten righteous, would you spare the city?”

Lord, help me.

—Bro. Dan Doolittle

LESSON 5: NOVEMBER 1, 2026

MOSES INTERCEDED FOR MIRIAM

Numbers 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

4 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

5 And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.

6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.

10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.

11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.

13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.

15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

MEMORY VERSE: Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. —Luke 6:28

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Miriam and Aaron grew jealous of Moses, believing they should be esteemed as much as he was. God heard their murmuring, came down in the pillar of the cloud, and spoke to the three of them at the door of the tabernacle. He expressed His displeasure with Miriam and Aaron and struck Miriam with leprosy. Aaron pleaded with Moses to forgive him and Miriam, admitting they had spoken foolishly and sinned. Moses cried out to the Lord to heal Miriam. The Lord instructed that Miriam be shut out of the camp for seven days, after which all would be well.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Numbers 12:3 **Moses was very meek:** He was depressed and afflicted in mind and spirit more than any man. Moses was given the great task of leading a vast multitude of rebellious people, and his own brother and sister grew jealous of him (*Clarke*). Several commentaries including *Clarke* state that meek/depressed in this context means pressed down in spirit, humbled, afflicted, or deeply lowly, not “sad” or “discouraged”; i.e., “Now this man Moses was bowed down or afflicted more than any man.”

LESSON BACKGROUND

According to Jewish tradition, Miriam was five to seven years older than Moses, and Aaron was three years older than Moses.

Miriam’s role in watching over her baby brother as he floated in the basket among the reeds of the Nile River was instrumental in saving his life from Pharaoh’s cruel decree. Eighty years later, after the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, Miriam led the song of praise to God for His great deliverance from Pharaoh’s army.

When God first called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, Moses said he could not because of his slow speech and tongue. God told Moses he would use Aaron as his mouthpiece because Aaron spoke well. Aaron served as Moses’ spokesman when presenting God’s plan of deliverance to the elders of Israel and when confronting Pharaoh. God used Aaron’s staff to execute the first three plagues on Egypt.

Bible scholars and historians offer several possible reasons for Moses’ speech impediment. His difficulty in speaking could have been a physical handicap, such as a lisp or stutter. Another possibility is that he had lost eloquence in public speaking after spending forty years in the wilderness tending sheep. There is also the likelihood that Moses was insecure in the great role God had placed upon him. Regardless of the true nature of Moses’ slow speech and tongue, God used it in such a way to ensure that Moses would not receive the glory when God delivered Israel from bondage. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is the significance of Miriam being listed before Aaron in the scriptures regarding their complaints against Moses and his wife?
2. Why did Miriam and Aaron's complaint about Moses' wife quickly escalate into broader issues?
3. How likely is it that one complaint against someone can grow into several, unless that person allows God help them?
4. Why didn't Moses defend himself against his siblings' accusations?
5. God intervened quickly. Why was God so eager to resolve the conflict sooner rather than later?
6. Why did Moses forgive Miriam and Aaron when it was clear that God was angry with them for their obvious spiritual jealousy?
7. Did God "require" Moses to forgive Miriam and Aaron?
8. Describe the possible long-term consequences had not Moses forgiven Miriam and Aaron.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Moses' intercession for the children of Israel after they made the golden calf was remarkable, commendable, and historically significant. Had not Moses stepped into the gap between God's wrath and the nation at large, there would not have been a nation of Israel from that day forward. God stated He would have to start over with the children of Moses.

When Miriam and Aaron sinned by speaking against Moses and God's calling on Moses' life, however, the dynamics were completely different. The children of Israel chiefly blamed God for their difficulties, even though they complained to Moses. Their complaint was not a direct affront to Moses as Miriam and Aaron's was. Essentially, Miriam and Aaron attacked Moses personally and the calling God put on him by trying to elevate their own calling. Moses was faithful to forgive them anyway and to pray to God that He would forgive them as well.

It is hard to imagine the power we individually have to affect change when we either choose to forgive or not to forgive! To forgive is to allow another chance to see God's true purpose unfold in the life

of the one forgiven, even if a terrible mistake was made before getting there. To not forgive is to decide that God's calling on their life, which has not yet fully come to light, is not important enough for me to give it a chance.

"Dear Jesus, help me forgive, even if I don't see all the possibilities at the end of forgiveness. Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

When you turn forgiveness like a diamond to the light, you'll find different "cuts" that create its beauty. Applying "cuts across self" to the stony situations of life create a beautiful soul. Meekness is one of these "cuts."

The grace of meekness is so undervalued today. A closer look reveals its worth. Bro Ostis Wilson said of meekness, "[It is] strength and power held in check. It is a wise, self-controlled, calm mind displaying a gentleness that is not easily provoked." Meekness helped Moses with grace to forgive Miriam and deal with the children of Israel for forty years.

I came across a podcast by Elisabeth Elliott and would like to share some excerpts of what she said:

"Meekness is not weakness, sluggishness or being too lazy to bother to get into an argument. It isn't being too fearful to speak or being too indifferent. It's not fragility. To be meek is to make yourself small, to not react negatively in the difficult places of life."

Much of our unrest in life comes from conflict. Conflict comes when I want to excuse myself, protect myself, to think of "my time, my space and my rights." Meekness is developed through the little irritations, the inconveniences, the ordinary things that cut across my will. Meekness springs from love. It's a new response to things that would naturally make me lash out.

When things invade my territory, space, time or when some act of aggression is made toward me, lift it up to Jesus and ask how it looks to Him? The insults? The hurts? Isaiah 53:7 notes, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." 1 Peter 2:23 states, "Who, when he was reviled [*to criticize in an angry, abusive, insulting*

manner], reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

“Meekness and forgiveness are deeply connected spiritual virtues. Meekness provides the inner emotional restraint and strength to offer true, lasting forgiveness” [Google/AI].

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 6: NOVEMBER 8, 2026

JOB PRAYED FOR HIS THREE FRIENDS

Job 42:1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

7 And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. —James 5:11

CENTRAL THOUGHT

God finally spoke to Job's three friends after He revealed Himself to Job. God made it very clear to the three men that they needed an intercessor to stand between them and His wrath—and Job was to be their intercessor!

WORD DEFINITIONS

Job 42:3 **Hideth counsel without knowledge:** to presume to understand that which God has not yet revealed (*Clarke*).

Job 42:10 **The LORD turned the captivity of Job:** The LORD delivered Job from the emotional, physical, and temporal reverses he suffered.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Job was perfect and upright; he feared God, and shunned evil, as described in Job 1:1. After losing his great wealth, his ten children, and finally his health, his wife urged him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Three of Job’s friends heard of his calamity and came to comfort him. They saw his unspeakable grief and sat with him in silence for seven days and seven nights.

Much of the rest of the book of Job describes the assumption of his three friends that he must have sinned to deserve such punishment. Job, knowing he had maintained a careful, prayerful life before God, denied any wrongdoing.

God allowed Job’s three friends to exhaust their arguments, which were based on their presumed understanding of Job’s heart and life. After God helped Job more fully grasp His glory, He turned His attention to the three friends’ presumptuous accusations against Job’s character. God commanded the three friends to bring sacrifices for their sinful folly, and Job would pray for them. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did God choose to deal with Job and his friends in the order He did?
2. Why did God command Eliphaz and his two friends to make a sacrifice for their sin in Job’s presence and allow Job to pray for them?
3. God accepted Job’s three friends’ repentant sacrifice and Job’s intercessory prayer on their behalf. What did God do for Job after he prayed for his friends?
4. Why did God want Job to forgive his friends and pray for them?
5. What might God have done differently had Job refused to forgive his three friends and pray for them?
6. Job’s extended family and acquaintances came to Job and offered their comfort and gave him gifts after he forgave and prayed for his friends. Why didn’t they offer their comfort and gifts sooner?
7. Job lived many years after his great losses and affliction. What comfort does this give us regarding the hard places God allows us to go through?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Some of the hardest things to bear are false accusations. In Job's case, his three friends assumed he was guilty of sins he had not committed. God hates false accusations not only because of the great pain they cause but also because they elevate the accuser to a level reserved for God alone, the judge of a person's heart.

God could have told Job's three friends to repent and offer sacrifices for their sins without involving Job. Instead, He required Job to pray for his friends before He would accept them and turn away judgment for their folly.

An important point in the story of Job and his three friends is that God did not bring Job out of his great difficulty until after he had prayed for them. After Job forgave his friends and prayed that God would forgive them, God not only delivered Job from his troubles but He also gave him twice as much as he had before. Job did not pray for his friends because he knew God would reward him with renewed health, ten more children, and double wealth; he did so because it pleased God.

When we are hurt by false accusations, it is our unique responsibility and privilege to pray for those who wrongly accuse us. We may not end up with the same material wealth God gave Job, but God will bless us in ways we could never have imagined.

"Dear Lord, thank you for your perfect plan of reconciliation. Help me to pray for those who misunderstand me. Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

The lesson teaches us about the ways of man and how we are to respond to the actions of others. Here are a few points to consider:

1. Don't be so sure of things to the point we fail to rely on God for wisdom and instruction about how to handle situations in life.
2. Learn to live in a state of forgiveness with a forgiving attitude.
3. Guard our speech; as someone once said, "Pray more, talk less!"

A former co-worker once told me that there was one thing he could not stand: for people to lie about him or falsely accuse him. While it can be very frustrating to bear such matters, Job's example

shows what we must do. We can't judge a person's heart. Often, we don't know the things that others have been through or why they are going through something at the moment. Job's three friends had to humble themselves before God for their actions. Job had to humble himself also. Humility is required in all that we do.

A forgiving attitude enables us to live in freedom. It helped Job in forgiving his friends. It also enabled him to freely pray for them. To truly forgive we are called upon by God to pray for those who despitefully use us, as taught in Matthew 5:44. Forgiveness helped Job hear and obey God and opened the door for him to receive a far greater blessing.

We can see that presumption is not a good thing when dealing with spiritual matters. Yet we often presume and judge others based upon what we think we see, the rumors we have heard, and the things that we think we know. Presumption only makes the burden heavier for the unjustly accused and more difficult for them to extend forgiveness. In our daily life we must always exercise a forgiving attitude in the midst of trials and tests, accusations, and doubts. Then we can be as Job was toward his miserable comforters, praying for their welfare and good; and we, too, will be blessed!

—Bro. Paul Phillips

LESSON 7: NOVEMBER 15, 2026

DAVID FORGAVE KING SAUL

1 Samuel 24:1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.

11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

MEMORY VERSE: Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. —Romans 12:19

CENTRAL THOUGHT

King Saul and his three thousand men chased David and his six hundred men as if they were mere goats on the mountainside. Finding a cave, David and his men hid inside. Not long after, Saul entered the cave alone to refresh himself. David's men urged him to kill Saul while he slept, but David could not bring himself to do it. After cutting off the hem of Saul's robe, David's heart smote him as he realized he had touched the Lord's anointed. "Never forget that opportunity does not make a wrong thing right. That a ship was waiting to sail to Tarshish did not make it right for Jonah to take passage. Our actions must not be determined by the opening of the door of circumstance, but by conscience, faith, obedience, and the high sense of Christian honor" (*F.B. Meyer*).

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Samuel 24:4 **Cut off the skirt of Saul's robe:** The skirt of King Saul's robe had tassels signifying his royal position. Cutting off these tassels weighed on David's conscience because it was not "just a piece of cloth" (*Matthew Henry*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel before David killed Goliath, but David lived as a fugitive for most of the time until he ascended the throne. King Saul's jealousy of David began in earnest not long after David killed the giant Goliath. After David's victory over Goliath, Saul immediately sent David with his army. Soon after, the women of Israel came out to meet them, singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7b). This event solidified Saul's jealous rage against David. For the next several years, David narrowly escaped with his life, eluding Saul's wrath many times. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What kept David from seeking his own revenge, even when it seemed like he had the perfect opportunities?
2. How would David's reign as king have been affected had he killed King Saul in the cave?
3. Why did David feel bad about cutting off the hem of King Saul's robe?
4. If David had overridden his feeling of remorse, how effective would his efforts have been in preventing his men from killing King Saul?
5. How would God have regarded David had he allowed his men to kill King Saul, even if David himself had not killed him?
6. How does this lesson apply to our dealings with God's anointed spiritual leaders, such as pastors, ministers, and teachers, when we are tempted to feel like "something needs to be fixed"?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

If David had wronged King Saul at any time, it would have been understandable for him to flee out of guilt. However, Saul's only motive for seeking to kill David was jealousy. King Saul knew that God's spirit had left him and that it now rested upon David.

When David and his men found themselves in a perfect position to kill Saul while he slept, David could not bring himself to harm him. Instead, he thought he could "teach the king a lesson" by cutting off

the hem of Saul's robe, proving he had been given the opportunity to kill him but did not.

This mischievous act perhaps indicates an internal struggle with which David wrestled. Understandably, David had an emotional battle, especially when he was presented with what seemed like the perfect opportunity to solve his own problem. David's men saw the same thing and urged him to strike King Saul at once. Thankfully, David remembered that God had anointed Saul as king and that it would have to be God who removed him from the throne.

If David had harbored resentment or unforgiveness toward King Saul, the temptation to kill him, or even to allow his men to do the deed, would have been too great for him to resist. David's unforgiveness toward King Saul would have put a permanent stain on his character and reign.

"Dear Heavenly Father, help me remember that vengeance belongs to you alone. Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

After Saul died, David lamented, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives" (2 Samuel 1:23). David forgave all that Saul had done, even things that came by the hand of Saul that David did not understand. David was an innocent shepherd youth when he was sent for by Saul (1 Samuel 16:19). In the beginning, Saul loved David greatly, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (1 Samuel 16:21; 1 Samuel 18:1). Then the women sang, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands," and Saul eyed David from that day forward, practicing mischief against him. Saul became David's enemy although David did not hate Saul.

Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David (1 Samuel 18:28-29). Saul let them marry in hopes that David might die, but Michal loved him dearly and saved his life (1 Samuel 18:20-21; 1 Samuel 19:12-13).

Old men are to teach the young men, but what are we teaching them? Samson's wife was given away and he retaliated greatly (Judges 14:20; Judges 15:1-8). Saul gave David's wife Michal away to another man (1 Samuel 25:44), hating David so much that he destroyed his own daughter's loving relationship and marriage. Doth not the word of God say, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder"?

So, while David was running for his life, he also had the opportunity to meditate on what Michal, the wife of his youth, might be doing at that time. At long last, David was able to get Michal back, but the relationship never seemed to heal, as she now despised him (2 Samuel 3:14; 2 Samuel 6:16). David's family became marked by sorrow and brokenness, and later his sin with Bathsheba brought even greater grief to his life, kingdom, and family. Even after Saul's death, the wounds and consequences surrounding Saul's treatment of David brought sorrow; yet David still chose forgiveness.

—E. E. Gracey

LESSON 8: NOVEMBER 22, 2026

HOSEA'S MARRIAGE ILLUSTRATED GOD'S LOVE

Hosea 1:1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beer, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call her name Loruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

8 Now when she had weaned Loruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Hosea 2:1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries...

3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

MEMORY VERSE: Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

—Hosea 8:2

CENTRAL THOUGHT

God's command to Hosea to marry a woman with a bad reputation was an allegory of the unfaithfulness of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah toward God and of God's desire to draw them back to Him and forgive them. Hosea's wife bore him three children, and God commanded that they be given names foretelling the fates of

the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Along with prophecies of future captivity, God also included promises of restoration when they would turn from their spiritual adultery back to Him. He promised to forgive their iniquities and, in His faithfulness, to betroth them to Himself forever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hosea 1:4 **Call his name Jezreel:** God will disperse, as in the sowing of seed (*Clarke*).

Hosea 1:6,9: **Call her Lo-ruhamah:** Lo (*not*) beloved and not having obtained mercy (*Barnes*); **Call his name Lo-ammi:** not my people (*Clarke*). Again, “Lo” meaning not.

Hosea 2:1: **Ammi; Ruhamah:** my people; beloved or tenderly pitied (*Barnes*).

Hosea 2:16: **Ishi:** my husband; a title of love and affection

Hosea 2:16: **Baali:** my master; a title exciting fear and apprehension (*Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The kingdom of Israel, which began with King Saul, was first united as a nation and lasted through three kings before splitting into two kingdoms—the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah and Benjamin). The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell into idolatry as soon as it separated from the kingdom of Judah. After 210 years of unfaithfulness, God caused the kingdom of Israel to go into captivity. The kingdom of Judah experienced ups and downs for several years. Some of the kings of Judah served God and some did not. The kingdom as a whole generally followed the course the king set during their reign. After Judah’s final four kings proved unfaithful, God allowed Judah to fall into captivity 135 years after the kingdom of Israel fell. The prophet Hosea was commissioned as a young man to prophesy concerning Israel and Judah’s eventual return from captivity when they finally recognized their great error in forsaking God. After members of the tribes returned to Jerusalem as a restored people—though still under foreign rule—they did not again practice the same widespread national idolatry that had characterized the kingdoms before the captivity. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. The Lord began to reveal His prophetic word to Hosea as a young man during the reigns of four kings of Judah. The last of these kings was Hezekiah, a God-fearing king. What did God foresee for Judah several generations ahead?
2. What did the names of Hosea's three children mean?
3. Since Hezekiah was a good king and the people as a whole served God during his reign, why did He warn them early about the events He foresaw for the future of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel?
4. God saw that both kingdoms would go into captivity for their sins unless they repented. How was their situation similar to the warning God gave Jonah to preach to Nineveh?
5. The king of Nineveh believed the word of the Lord, as preached by Jonah, and he repented in sackcloth and ashes and commanded his entire kingdom to do the same. What was God's response to their repentance?
6. How could the kingdoms of Judah and Israel have avoided eventual captivity and experienced a better outcome?
7. When God issues a warning, what does He do when people repent and turn from their wicked ways?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Children have asked their parents this question for ages: "How do you know what's going to happen if I do this or don't do that?" The answer is often, "Because I've been there and done that!" Parents understand their children's personalities and can be uncannily accurate in predicting how each child will react to certain circumstances. Additionally, parents have experienced far more in life than their children and understand cause and effect more deeply.

Our Heavenly Father knows us infinitely better than even the most loving earthly parent who knows their child. He also inhabits eternity and sees the past, present, and future. He perfectly understands the end of every decision every human will ever make. While He understands the end of each path, yet from the beginning of time He determined to let every man and woman choose freely. In His

great love and mercy, God warns mankind in multiple ways about which path is best for them.

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for understanding me and for your love and patience. Help me choose the right path! Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

In this lesson, the prophet Hosea prophesies about the nation of Israel and Judah being carried away as captives and their government being abolished. Both nations are carried away captive due to their spiritual adultery of worshiping idols. The literal allegory that Hosea uses to tell the prophecy is difficult for us to read because it feels like we are reading material that should be off limits. Keep this in mind, that idol worship and the things that go with it should be off limits to God's people, then and now!

The vile, loathsome situation of idol worship was observed by Hosea, and the message that he sent them was one that would get their attention. It would be and should be unheard of for a priest/prophet to marry a harlot. The hearers would understand that a marriage like this was the most unwise and ill-advised union that a prophet could ever get into, yet in this case God told Hosea to marry the harlot.

The prophet Hosea used his marriage to illustrate the despicable, detestable situation that the nation of Israel and Judah were in due to idol worship. Just as a marriage of this nature would seem to be a lost cause and not worth the effort of restoration, Hosea said that God felt that way about Israel and Judah. God said that they would cease to be his people if they didn't repent. But just as in Hosea's allegory, his marriage was restored and returned to a place of value and respect. God was willing to forgive Israel and Judah and prophesied through Hosea that they would be able to be delivered from captivity and restored to the status of being His/God's people. This story, when understood properly, gives new meaning to the verse in Lamentations 3:22: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

May we all realize that if we feel that we are in a place that is so filthy with sin that no one will touch us, God has forgiven and restored those in the past, and He will do the same for us. God loves

you because you are His creation; not because you are perfect in yourself.

—Bro. Dan Adams

AMAZING LOVE: HOPE FOR THE BROKEN

The mind boggles at the challenges this marriage presents. What happened in Gomer's early life that contributed to her choices? Somewhere there was dysfunction. Perhaps she was lovely with deep-seated insecurities that drove her behavior. Perhaps there were financial needs that started her down the road. Maybe her father was an impossible man and she was looking for love and affection in the wrong ways. Perhaps simple rebellion was the root of the issue. Whatever the reasons, there is a saying, "Hurting people hurt people."

And what of Hosea? Undoubtedly he had a young man's dream of a pure bride and a happy home. Instead, there was the social stigma of his wife's promiscuity and the impact to their children. What kind of grace would it have taken to live and raise a family in this atmosphere? The betrayal is heartbreaking. So much pain had to have lived in their household. It reminds me of the words to the song, "Heartaches, broken pieces, ruined lives are why You died on Calvary."

The filth and wretched condition of people in bondage to addictions is appalling. Lifestyles are so perverted it's unfathomable. Hearts and mouths are so corrupt that they spew out profanity nonstop. People are so filled with hatred, malice and selfishness that they are not safe. Yet, God looks down to a degraded, sin-ridden creation, offering hope and healing to any who will accept His way.

What of the enormous cost to God Himself? Watching His precious Son be treated so abominably? And yet, God so loved mankind that in spite of the pain, He paid the price that brings redemption for any soul who chooses Him. "Amazing love, how could it be that thou, my God, should die for me." Hope. Redemption. Purity. Peace. Hosea's story really is an apt picture of God's love.

—Selected

LESSON 9: NOVEMBER 29, 2026

JESUS FORGAVE THOSE WHO CRUCIFIED HIM

Luke 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

MEMORY VERSE: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

—1 Corinthians 2:7-8

CENTRAL THOUGHT

As Jesus was led away to be crucified, He began warning the people about the coming judgment of Jerusalem, as well as the eventual final judgment of all mankind. He knew the awfulness of that day and was willing to die so that as many as possible would escape eternal death. Jesus' love for fallen humanity was so great that He was willing to beg His Father for their forgiveness, even as they nailed Him to the cross. He understood that they did not fully comprehend the greatness of their sin.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 23:26 **Simon, a Cyrenian**: Most Bible scholars agree that Simon of Cyrene, a city in modern-day Libya, was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who later became prominent Christians.

Luke 23:34 **They know not what they do**: The Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross were following orders and did not recognize whom they were crucifying. The Jewish rulers who caused Jesus to be crucified knew who Jesus claimed to be, but they did not believe He was the true Messiah for whom they were waiting (*Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the beginning, God prepared a plan to redeem His creation to Himself, knowing they would likely fall into sin. Since the penalty of sin is death, a ransom was needed. The ransom would have to die to satisfy the penalty of death. Jesus was willing to be the ransom for our souls. He not only agreed to die for those who crucified Him and for all mankind after that, but He was also willing to forgive those who crucified Him. He understood that they could not fully comprehend the awfulness of their actions. —C.L.C

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What judgement upon Jerusalem did Jesus foresee when he spoke of people calling for the mountains to cover them?
2. Why did Jesus say that those who crucified Him did not know what they were doing?
3. Would Jesus' death have had the same impact if He had not asked His Heavenly Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him?
4. Jesus asked forgiveness for those who crucified Him before they asked for forgiveness. Why was it necessary for it to be that way?
5. How often is it necessary for us today to forgive someone before they ask for forgiveness?
6. It is wonderful when people ask for forgiveness, but does it always occur?
7. When people do not ask for forgiveness, what does God expect of us, and why?
8. How does God enable us to forgive those who have not asked for forgiveness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

At His crucifixion, Jesus' view of the past, present, and future was shaped by the perspective of a Divine Creator who loves His creation. In the beginning, in Genesis 1:26, His Heavenly Father said, "Let us make man in our image." He valued us enough as His creation to make a conscious decision to offer Himself as a sacrifice to redeem us from the penalty of sin, even though He was guiltless. In short, Jesus forgave us because He loved us.

Choosing to forgive someone who neither understands how deeply they hurt us nor seeks our forgiveness is an act of love—and it brings unfathomable relational and spiritual good compared to holding on to unforgiveness. Forgiveness, regardless of the other person's attitude or actions, builds a bridge that would not otherwise exist. It can start a process of rebuilding a relationship that would otherwise remain broken. It can also start a chain reaction in which those we forgive, forgive others, who in turn can start other chain reactions of forgiveness. Jesus understands how powerful forgiveness is; this is why He still practices and endorses it. The devil also grasps the importance of forgiveness and seeks to fortify his kingdom by stamping it out.

"Dear Jesus, help me to forgive more and more in the spirit of love you have shown me. Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Jesus set the ultimate standard of how to forgive. He was the epitome of love and forgiveness. When we consider the depth of His forgiveness toward the ones who crucified Him, we realize that it came from a deeper love than human nature possesses; it was divine.

Jesus is the Son of God. Over and over throughout His earthly journey we see His majesty and divine power manifested. The time of His passion was no exception!

Jesus was the living Word of God; therefore, it is essential for us to follow His example. As Jesus endeavored to please His Father while here on earth, we must follow His example in order to please God our Heavenly Father.

It was divine love that enabled Jesus to forgive on this level. Because God is love, Jesus perfectly manifested that same love. It is the divine love of God that facilitates forgiveness. We can see this love manifested when Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). It was an example of His giving them a reason to be forgiven. We see Him caring for the well-being of the very ones who crucified Him. Divine love was at the root of this way of feeling toward the people who hurt Him.

Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost when he asked God to forgive those who stoned him. He said with a loud voice, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). This certainly showed him following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Today, if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and with the divine love of God, we can forgive on this level. We can look beyond the hurt that we experience and have a genuine desire to forgive, as well as care for the well-being of the person or persons causing us harm.

—Sis. Doris Clay

LESSON 10: DECEMBER 6, 2026

STEPHEN FORGAVE THOSE WHO STONED HIM

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

MEMORY VERSE: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. —Matthew 5:44

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Stephen preached a Holy Spirit-inspired message to the council after being brought before them on false charges of blasphemy, reminding them that they were stiffnecked, as their fathers had been. Cut to the heart, they stoned him to death. His last words were a prayer for their forgiveness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 6:8 **Stephen**: One of the seven men chosen by the congregation of believers to help oversee the daily distribution of food and other necessities to the widows and poor among them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Early Morning Church grew quickly. Acts 6:1 describes this growth as “the number of the disciples was multiplied.” However, problems arose when the Grecians began to murmur against the Hebrews, believing their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The apostles recommended that the body of believers select seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, to oversee the distribution of resources to widows and the needy in the church. Stephen was among the seven chosen.

Acts 6:8 tells us, “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” This angered the religious elite, who realized their former grip on power was threatened by the “newcomers.” They began to dispute with Stephen, but “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). The rulers of the synagogue then brought in men who falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy against the teachings of Moses and against God. These false accusations stirred up the people of the city, the elders, and the scribes. In the uproar, they brought Stephen to the council where false witnesses were again brought in to accuse him of blasphemy, a crime punishable by stoning. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Stephen “did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Why did this not endear him to the religious rulers who had been so long entrenched in power?
2. The council was “cut to the heart” by Stephen’s rebuke of their spiritual condition. Did this mean they were convicted of their lost state, or were they enraged and inflamed by what Stephen said?
3. Why did Stephen tell the council they were “stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” yet pray for their forgiveness as they stoned him to death?

4. Stephen faced false witnesses twice before being condemned to death by stoning. How difficult would it be to maintain a forgiving spirit in the face of such injustice?
5. When Stephen faced the council's violent anger, he looked up and saw "Jesus standing at the right hand of God." How did this sight comfort him in his hour of great need?
6. It would be easy to view Stephen's death as a great tragedy and a loss for the cause of God. What good could an event like this possibly do for the furtherance of the kingdom of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is hard to imagine what good a single act of forgiveness might accomplish. The scriptures are silent on whether Stephen could glimpse the future when he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God in his final moments on earth. Had he been able to see but a few days beyond his present hour of distress, Stephen would have seen the fulfillment of his prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Saul of Tarsus was among the witnesses who saw Stephen stoned to death. Saul later became known as Paul and was greatly used by God to help spread the gospel throughout the known world.

We cannot fathom the power of one act of forgiveness either. Just as unforgiveness spreads its ugly influence like ripples on the water's surface, forgiveness sends forth its power to untold generations. Saul was brought that much closer to the kingdom of God when Stephen prayed for God to forgive him. How could Stephen have imagined that Saul, the young man who terrorized the church for a short time, would become the Apostle Paul? How can we know what power lies in our God-given privilege and responsibility to forgive when it seems the hardest thing to do at that time?

"Dear Lord, help me to forgive, even when I cannot see the full end of forgiveness. Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

"Stephen full of faith"—as I consider these words, I think of the great confidence Stephen had in the One about whom he preached. He believed in and trusted the One who loved his soul, died for him,

and saved him from all of his sins. He also believed this same Savior was able to deliver others from their sins.

We too need to be full of faith and have full confidence in Christ so that we can tell others about the love Jesus has for their souls. People will not always accept the message that they are sinners and are headed to hell. When they hear these things, they may become bitter, and even gnash on you, and persecute you. They may put the messenger to death, just as they did Stephen.

"But Stephen being full of the Holy Ghost." Dear ones, we must not only be full of faith and have great confidence in our Savior, but we also must be filled with the Holy Spirit if we are to be able to pray as Stephen did: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The One in whom Stephen placed his faith and confidence similarly prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

May we be full of faith, love, and the Holy Spirit that we may be faithful to our fellow man to tell them of the love of Christ no matter what the consequences.

—Bro. Rick Cox

LESSON 11: DECEMBER 13, 2026

PAUL WAS FORGIVEN FOR PERSECUTING THE CHURCH

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

MEMORY VERSE: For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. —1 Corinthians 15:9

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Saul, a chief persecutor of the church, met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus, finding some honesty in Saul's heart, helped him understand that he had been "kicking against the pricks." Saul found forgiveness for his sins that day. Jesus sent Ananias to pray for Saul so that he might regain his sight and receive the Holy Ghost. It was

difficult at first for the believers in Jerusalem to believe that Saul was now one of them, but Barnabas told them how Jesus had appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and converted him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 9:5 **Pricks:** The prick was a piece of iron attached to the end of a stick, used to urge the ox when drawing the plow. When a stubborn ox kicked back against the prick, he wounded himself more deeply than if he had simply been prodded by the goad (*Clarke*).

Acts 9:10 **Ananias:** Most Bible scholars agree that he was one of the original seventy sent by Jesus to preach the gospel. He was well known among the believers (*Barnes and Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Saul was a native of Tarsus, a city in what is now south-central Turkey. It lies about 12 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Records indicate that Saul's family moved to Jerusalem when he was young. He was "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel," a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. Saul's training prepared him to become a leading Pharisee, a role he later embodied as he began persecuting Christian believers.

Saul's zeal as chief persecutor of the Christian faith eventually led him to Damascus, a city about 140 miles from Jerusalem. While on the road to Damascus, Saul met Jesus in the form of a great light shining down from Heaven, temporarily blinding him physically but enlightening him spiritually. —C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Ananias initially had trouble believing that Saul was truly converted when God told him to pray for him. How did it help for God to tell Ananias He that would reveal to Saul what great things he must suffer for His name's sake?
2. How did Ananias's calling Saul "Brother Saul" help Saul understand that he was forgiven for persecuting the church?
3. When the non-believing Jews in Damascus tried to kill Saul, how did the Christians living there respond?

4. If the Christians in Damascus had not forgiven Saul, what would they have done?
5. When Saul returned to Jerusalem the disciples there were afraid of him because they did not believe he was truly a disciple. How did Barnabas help in this situation?
6. When the Grecians in Jerusalem tried to kill Saul, how did the believing Jews in Jerusalem show their love and forgiveness toward him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Stephen's prayer that God would forgive those who stoned him to death was crucial for Saul, who was present at Stephen's death. Saul's need for forgiveness did not end there. After receiving Christ's forgiveness, Saul also needed the forgiveness and acceptance of the believers he had previously persecuted.

Forgiveness becomes necessary after an offense has been committed. Stephen prayed for forgiveness for those responsible for his death, including Saul. After Saul was converted, others were given the privilege and responsibility of forgiving Saul for what he had done to them in the past, so they could welcome him into their fellowship.

Here are a few key facts summarizing the believers' forgiveness of Saul. 1. They forgave him even though he was unable to ask each of them personally for forgiveness. They believed others' reports about him. 2. When the body of believers eventually forgave Saul, it paved the way for him to later become the Apostle Paul. 3. Ananias was instrumental in helping Saul at the beginning of his conversion, but Barnabas was the most active in supporting Saul's spiritual journey after his conversion. He introduced Saul to the believers in Jerusalem. Later, after Saul had returned to Tarsus, Barnabas went to Tarsus and asked him to join him on a missionary journey. This trip was the first of several missionary journeys Saul/Paul took in the gospel effort.

"Dear heavenly Father, whom can I forgive so that I can bring them to the cross to be forgiven of their sins? Whom can I encourage along the way after they are saved so they may fulfill the spiritual destiny You have in mind for them? Amen." —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

Saul of Tarsus and the effects of his persecution had without doubt left a long-lasting mark on the Christian community. How could it not? Families who had lost a spouse, father, or a mother to the sword, stone, or were imprisoned by his campaign of persecution were left to pick up the pieces.

Memories don't fade overnight, and hurts don't always heal themselves. It's no wonder that the news of this man's conversion was met with skepticism and trepidation. The believers he once sought to destroy were among those to whom Paul was called to preach the Gospel. I wonder how often the "Sower of Discord" might have tried to exploit these painful memories to bring division and unrest in the church by rehearsing in their minds the unfairness of their losses as they listened to a message he brought or epistle he sent. How easily murmurs of, "I just don't trust him," and stories of injuries suffered at the hand of Paul could have grown into full-blown dissension. Thankfully, the church didn't follow the fateful, natural course of human affairs. Instead, saints filled with grace and the spirit of forgiveness, believed in the same transforming power of Jesus Christ that they had witnessed in their own lives, and they embraced Brother Paul. They willingly opened their hearts, homes, and purses to assist in his ministry, showing a grace that forgave ungrudgingly and unconditionally—without litigation of their grievances or a list of preconditions to reconciliation.

When Jesus once told Peter and the other disciples that their duty of forgiveness was not seven times in a day but four hundred ninety times per day, their response may have been one of astonishment at what no doubt seemed beyond reason or possibility. We might think the same offense will never be committed against us 490 times in a day; however, the thoughts of those offenses can present themselves like a barrage throughout the course of a day. Each time is an opportunity for us to forgive and dismiss the thought. May the Lord help and teach us all to daily choose the path of forgiveness as these saints of the early church did with Brother Paul.

—Bro. Clint Doolittle

LESSON 12: DECEMBER 20, 2026

PAUL HAD TO FORGIVE HIMSELF

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

1 Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and

reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 3:13-14

CENTRAL THOUGHT

The Apostle Paul regretted persecuting the church but realized he had done so out of ignorance and unbelief. He accepted God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others, and then he forgave himself. This enabled him to move forward in the work God had called him to do.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Corinthians 15:8 **And last of all he was seen of me also:** Paul met Jesus on the way to Damascus in a great light that temporarily blinded him. Jesus then spoke to him, and he recognized Him. It changed his life!

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul recognized his grave error in persecuting the church. He understood how hard it was for Christians to believe he was one of them after his conversion. Once they were fully convinced, however, they welcomed him into their fellowship. Forgiving himself, however, was another matter, judging by what he later wrote about his earlier behavior. He never forgot who he had been—"the chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15), because he "persecuted the church of God and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13). Thankfully, he understood that since God and the church had forgiven him, he needed to forgive himself.

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. How did Paul "see" Jesus for himself?
2. What impact did "seeing Jesus" have on Paul?
3. What does a personal revelation of Jesus Christ mean to us today?
4. How much did Paul's feeling that he was the "least of the apostles" keep him from faithfully working for God?

5. If we feel unworthy of God's love, grace, and forgiveness, how can we keep those feelings from hindering God's call on our lives?
6. How did Paul view his efforts toward the kingdom of God?
7. How did Paul regard reaching a point where he no longer had to contend with temptations of remorse, or with being puffed up with pride because of God's work through his ministry?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Paul's forgiveness encompassed four distinct phases: Stephen's prayer for forgiveness, Jesus' forgiveness of Paul's past, the body of believers forgiving Paul, and Paul's self-forgiveness.

What a shame it would have been if Paul had received the first three parts of forgiveness yet refused to forgive himself! How would he have fulfilled the calling God had on his life?

The question we must ask ourselves today is: "How can a lack of self-forgiveness affect me"? While it is imperative that we receive God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of others and that we seek God's help not to repeat the things for which we have been forgiven, we must also accept God's forgiveness and stop condemning ourselves for sins He has forgiven. Forgiving ourselves can be one of the hardest forms of forgiveness to extend. We must, though, to avoid receiving the other forms of forgiveness in vain.

"Dear Lord, thank you for forgiving me and for helping others forgive me. Please help me gain victory over all things that have offended you and others. Help me forgive myself! Amen."

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

"It's time to come in for the evening," said the young boy's parents. "I don't want to," he resisted. Grumbling he came in and went to his room. "I'm going to ride my bike," he determined to himself. Easing the bedroom window open, he let himself down to the ground outside. Tree frogs sang in the summer evening, and the smooth blacktop of the highway beckoned.

Wearily Mr. Terry locked the door of the store that he and his wife owned next to our floral shop. He got in his van and headed

home. The drive included areas of dense forest flanking the highway with homes nestled among the trees. He never saw the little boy on the bike. The child didn't survive the tragic accident.

Learning to forgive yourself encompasses things said or done intentionally, things done in ignorance or accidentally, cruelties committed in childhood, words and actions committed in the heat of the moment—decisions made, words said, or actions taken that live on repeat in the mind. These memories can be “if-onlys” that haunt you.

Years ago Sis. Ruth Murphy preached a message and said that if we keep repenting for things we've already repented of, it's like crucifying the Savior afresh. We haven't accepted His atonement.

Bro. Eugene Cole, in a message on forgiveness, reminded us of Peter's betrayal of Jesus, Paul's persecution of the saints, Judah's involvement in selling Joseph, David's numbering of the people and his great indiscretion. Yet, God was merciful and still used them mightily. Paul wrote of, “...forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13b).

If it's wrong to not forgive our brother, might it be just as wrong to not forgive ourselves? Forgiving includes acknowledging, “I did it and it caused pain/harm,” and then repenting (which is not the same as regretting), prayerfully endeavoring not to repeat the offense, and then choosing to move forward.

Salvation cleanses the heart, but it doesn't remove memories. When painful memories resurface in the mind, take them to the Lord in prayer and resist the urge to dwell on them. Paul's counsel: “...whatsoever things are lovely...whatsoever things are of good report...think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

LESSON 13: DECEMBER 27, 2026

THE PRICE OF UNFORGIVENESS

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Hebrews 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

MEMORY VERSE: For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

—James 2:13

CENTRAL THOUGHT

Jesus taught His disciples to forgive others, keeping in mind that they had been forgiven a debt they could never repay. The penalty for refusing to forgive those who wronged them was not being forgiven themselves.

There is another heavy price for unforgiveness: Those we love most are most affected by it. The disease of unforgiveness spreads and infects them as well unless they rise above it by choosing to forgive.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 18:24 **Ten thousand talents:** \$225 million to \$300 million based on current market prices for silver. \$3.6 billion to \$6 billion based on current labor wages.

Matthew 18:28 **An hundred pence:** \$500 to \$700 based on current market prices for silver. \$6,000 to \$10,000 based on current labor wages.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Before Peter was called to follow Jesus he recognized his sinful state and begged, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Jesus called Matthew as he sat at his seat of customs collecting taxes for the Roman government. His neighbors would have regarded him as a traitor. Surely Matthew felt unworthy of forgiveness, yet Jesus forgave him and called him to follow Him. The other disciples also had things in their lives that needed

forgiveness. Jesus forgave them all and also called them to follow Him so that they might help spread the good news of the gospel!

—C.L.C.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. When Peter asked Jesus whether forgiving his brother seven times would be enough, how surprised do you suppose he was to hear Jesus reply, “seventy times seven”?
2. How relieved would the servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents have been?
3. What led the servant to imprison his fellow servant for a much smaller debt?
4. How justified was the king in becoming angry with the forgiven servant for refusing to forgive his fellow servant’s much smaller debt?
5. How much clearer could Jesus have been when He ended the parable by saying, “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses”?
6. How serious must an offense be before God determines we do not need to forgive?
7. Hebrews 12:15 warns that bitterness can spread to others. How does this happen when a person does not forgive?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Picture a world without forgiveness; this was nearly the case in the time of Noah. Genesis 6:5 tells us, “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Had Noah not “found grace in the eyes of the LORD,” God would have brought an end to the world.

Wicked imaginations do double harm, affecting both ourselves and others. Unforgiveness is fueled by wicked imaginations, and those imaginations, in turn, foster yet more unforgiveness, creating a death spiral beyond redemption—unless there is divine intervention. Wars, family feuds, neighborhood conflicts, workplace friction, divorce, murder, and all manner of crimes and vices stem from the cycle of

unforgiveness and wicked imaginations. Is it any wonder that God exacts such a penalty for unforgiveness? He knows the full end of unforgiveness!

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving me of a debt I could never pay! Please help me to have a forgiving heart toward those who hurt or offend me. Amen.” —Bro. Clifford L. Cole

REFLECTIONS

This lesson is very solemn and one we should take seriously. Unforgiveness brings many dangers, including unrest, bitterness, and hindered prayers. All these and other things can cause separation from God. The greatest danger of all is losing the privilege of spending eternity in heaven; the alternative—spending eternity without God.

Do you think Peter tried to follow Jesus’ exact words when he had the chance? What about us? Was the number 490 really the main point? I don’t think so. Jesus was showing us that if we keep choosing to forgive, we will probably lose count along the way. How far would you get—100 times, 250 times, or even more? Each of us has faced times when we needed to forgive someone for a misunderstanding or a wrongdoing done to us. Surely the opposite is also true: we have all said or done things that required us to ask another person for forgiveness.

Unforgiveness causes a ripple effect, often harming more people than the parties directly involved. Throughout history there have been many examples where unforgiveness was passed from generation to generation and much damage was done. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ extends mercy and forgiveness to all His creation, and we are obligated to extend it to one another.

The price Jesus paid for the forgiveness of our sins far exceeds anything in this world. May God help us all to forgive. No offense is worth the cost of unforgiveness and the end result—eternal torment.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

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