

Dear Crossroads Family,

An umpire for a community men's softball league was running a bit late to the game he was to call when he was stopped for speeding by a local police officer. When asked by the policeman why he was in such a hurry, he explained that he was late for the game he was to officiate. He hoped the officer would let him off with a warning after hearing his story, but the officer gave him a ticket anyway and told him to take it up with the judge.

A few months later, the umpire was calling his first game of the season, and the first batter up was that policeman. The officer recognized the umpire, and the umpire recognized the policeman. As the officer stepped into the batter's box, he asked the umpire, "So, how'd the thing with the ticket go?" to which the umpire responded, "Let's put it this way: "You'd better swing at every pitch."

That's a picture of our natural, human inclination when we feel like someone has done us wrong or damaged us in some way. If given the chance, we want to get them back—to inflict similar (or even a little more) damage to them as they levied upon us.

In *The Singer* (the first book in Calvin Miller's Singer Trilogy), the opening line of one chapter reads: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth; a fair, satisfying and rapid way to a sightless, toothless world." Retaliation rather than forgiveness feels fair and satisfying when we've been injured, yet taken to its logical conclusion it leaves everyone damaged and impaired.

God's word calls us to a better way—the way of forgiveness. But our God not only challenges us to be unrelenting forgivers, He demonstrates what that forgiveness looks like. As Colossians 2:13-14 says, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made us alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

Thankfully, because of God's grace, we don't have to swing at every pitch. He doesn't retaliate against our sins and shortcomings by making every call in life go against us as we deserve. Instead, He offers forgiveness and blessing.

This coming Sunday, the first Sunday after Thanksgiving, we will take some time to consider our response to God's unconditional grace and mercy toward us. (Sermon notes are provided below.) We will see that the best way we can express our thanksgiving to God for His forgiveness in Christ it to extend that forgiveness to others.

Happy Thanksgiving!

See you Sunday.

Love,
Bro. Doug

_____

The Struggle to Forgive
Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus called for _____ forgiveness of offenders. Peter wanted to be a serious, committed follower of Jesus. But Jesus's ideals and directives regularly _____ _____ of Peter than he believed he could do. So, he sought to establish a _____ on just how high the bar of forgiveness could reasonably be placed. Jesus multiplied Peter's sevenfold into seventy-sevenfold forgiveness—a number meant to break the habit of _____ _____. Our forgiveness must have no limits.

Jesus' parable illustrates why such an expectation is not _____. The parable moves us from being the offended to the offender. Instead, the offended is ____. Having our entire sin debt forgiven by God, we are the servant whose debt of 10,000 talents was erased—___ _____ day's wages for a typical servant. That's how large and _____ our sin debt was to God.

The actions of that servant who demands repayment and punishment against a fellow servant for a debt of 100 denarii appear hypocritical, calloused, and _____. God knows the offenses we suffer can be costly, painful, and _____ to forgive. But in comparison, the difference between the _____ He experienced due to our sin and the _____ He paid to forgive us is as great as the difference between a debt that would take you ___ months to settle and one that would take you nearly _____ years to repay.

Forgiveness is deliberately deciding you will no longer hold a person in _____ for something valuable they cost you—whether a damaged _____, a betrayed _____, or a _____ _____. You won't make them pay by giving them a cold shoulder or by slander or by some other method of _____ Christian love.

Remember, our sins are _____ and _____, but God's grace in Christ _____ _____ each one when we accepted Jesus. So, in response we decide to forgive and forgive again.
And here's the bonus: each time we forgive, we _____ _____.

_____

A Few Announcements:

Crossroads Monthly Food & Diaper Drive is next Sunday, December 6. Bring your donations and place them in the red bins. Please do not donate expired food items! A shopping list is included in the bulletin.

Children's Ministry will be presenting a skit, "The Bethlehem Box" next Sunday, December 6, during the Worship Service. You don't want to miss it!

The Lottie Moon Post Office will be open on December 1. This year it will be located in the Library.

The 2027 Proposed Budget, as recommended by the Finance Committee, is available in the foyer for your review. If you have any questions, contact Sandy McDuffy or Phil Dieter as specified in the cover letter by December 6. A vote will be taken at a Special Called Business Meeting on Sunday, December 13, at 4:00 pm.

Crossroads Family Christmas Tree: Bring an ornament from your family to add to our Sanctuary tree. All ornaments will be returned after Christmas.

Dr. Doug Diehl
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