

PORTMORE UNITED CHURCH
Cell Sunday Bible Study

FORGIVENESS
Text Matthew 18:21-22

A DEFINITION OF FORGIVENESS.

In biblical teaching there are two emphases in the term *forgiveness*: {1} the removal of the barrier of sin; and {2} the restoration of fellowship. The offence committed forms a barrier between a person and God and between two people, thereby alienating the two. Forgiveness is the gracious act that removes that barrier and restores the fellowship of the people involved.

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?” [Matt 18:22]. Peter’s question is important, for Jesus placed a great emphasis on right relations with others. The first priority for any person is to be right with God. Second only to that is the importance to be right with other people. What obligation do we have to be right with others?

1. What to do when we have wronged others.

A. Ask God’s forgiveness.

Matthew 6:12-15 [READ]

What are debts or trespasses? - [*unfulfilled obligations*]

If we have sinned against a brother or sister, we must first ask God’s forgiveness. Why is this necessary ? [*All sin is fundamentally against God*]

B. Go to the person you have wronged, confess you wrong and reconcile. -[*Matt.5:23-24 -READ*]

More important than worship is the reconciliation with a brother or sister against whom one has sinned. Paul recognized that it takes two persons to reconcile differences. *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” [Rom. 12:18].*

2. What to do when someone has wronged you?

A. Go to that person personally and privately.

Ask Group to name ways in which others have wronged us?

Luke 17:3 -[READ] If you can effect reconciliation, you have gained your brother or sister. If not, you have done all that you can do.

B. In the case of a brother or sister [church] what must be done?

- 1st Step -Matthew 18:15 - [READ]. [Confront]
- 2nd Step - v16 [Have witnesses]

Even God cannot forgive a person who will not repent. Eph. 4:32 [READ]

3. Jesus answers Peter's Question.

- A. Peter no doubt thought that to forgive his brother seven times was enough. What was Jesus' reply? [Matt.18:22]. - *[forgiveness is unlimited and unconditional]*. This was evident in Jesus' prayer on the cross. [Lk.23:34]
- B. This truth is enforced by the parable of the unmerciful servant. [Matt. 18:23-35]. It deals with principles and relationships rather than with persons.

Conclusion

If Jesus had insisted on his rights, and if He gave us what we all deserved, there would have been no cross. What if Jesus dealt with us as we deal with others? It is a risky business to pray "*forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,*" do we really want God to be as forgiving as us? How could we have the nerve to ask for forgiveness if we are unwilling to offer it to others? Being unwilling to forgive is like destroying a bridge we will need to cross ourselves.