

## **BE FORGIVING & GIVING**

Jesus said, "as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them" and "be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." In Luke 6:37 He spells it out even further: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven."

Followers of Christ exercise the judgment of discernment, to choose good not evil. They apply the judgment of equanimity, examining our own lives first, bringing them in line with God's Word and ways by the power of the Holy Spirit. Not judgmental, but forgiving, giving and giving.

**JUDGMENTALISM** - Followers of Christ must not indulge in condemnatory judgment, but leave that to God, the righteous judge. A contentious critical spirit that is quick to condemn others does not reflect the character of Christ. "Judgmentalism is merciless," notes theologian RK Hughes.

"Judgmentalism attaches motives to actions that have never been there. It sees others in the worst light. It pompously assumes the place of God (which is unwittingly to invite God's wrath), observes Hughes. "Judgmentalism is at best a sign of spiritual cancer, and at its worst a sign of spiritual death." Is it in your life? Repent, receive God's grace and give it to others!

**BE FORGIVING** - Jesus said, "condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven." As you wish others would do to you, do so to them. Be merciful. "Forgive" occurs 66 times in the New Testament. It means to release, dismiss, set free, not hold accountable.

In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus told the story of the unforgiving servant. His master forgave him an incredible debt, but this servant would not release another man of a very small debt. The angry master then threw the unforgiving servant into prison. And Jesus says, "so also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from the heart."

**UNFORGIVENESS** - The Lord's prayer in Matthew 6 says, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," meaning those who owe us. Jesus says, "if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." He warns about the hypocrisy of unforgiveness.

Hughes explains, "Jesus is not implying that a person can become forgiven for sins by forgiving others. That would be salvation by works. Rather, His command is grounded on the fact that when God's grace saves a person, it changes him or her. A forgiving disposition is evidence that person has been forgiven by God." This is a discerning judgment of equanimity on ourselves.

**HYPOCRISY** - If you've been forgiven, how can you not forgive? Colossians 3:13 says, "put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another; and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." You must forgive!

"True Christians can and do forgive," notes Hughes. "This is not to say they may not struggle with forgiving, or battle bitterness or hatred, or be so hurt and in such emotional shock that they are unable to respond with forgiveness, but it is to say that they work at forgiving and ultimately do forgive." Because believers are regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. (Note, books such as "Resolving Everyday Conflicts" provide much help for nuances of forgiveness).

**BE GIVING** - In Luke 6:38 Jesus says, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Ever open a new cereal box and wonder why it's half empty? It's sold by weight, not volume. But Jesus says when you give to others, you'll get an overflow back.

"He will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way" (2Corinthians 9:10). Be a giver, not a taker. A forgiver, not a condemner. Not a keeper, but a giver, giving away God's grace.

**GIVE GRACE** - "No man shall ever be a loser in the long run, by deeds of self-denying charity and patient long-suffering love," says JC Ryle. "His patience and forbearance may be abused. But at the last he will be found a gainer, very often in this life, and certainly in the life to come."

If you experience the overwhelming grace of God in Christ, it will overflow through your life to those around you. You pass along God's grace, doing for others what you would want! ☐