

20 Days of Trouble

Topic #13 – Unforgiving Spirit

Textbook Def:

Not disposed to forgive or show mercy; unrelenting. Not allowing for mistakes, carelessness, or weakness.*

Real-Life Look:

Heather's words ripped through Adam like a tornado, leaving a path of disaster behind. "My mother was right. It was a mistake marrying you. You'll never amount to anything and we will always struggle just to survive. I'm sick and tired of taking care of everything. My life sucks because of you." Sure, things have been rough, but he'd been trying desperately to figure out how to make life better for his family. Why bother now? Heather made it clear how she felt and Adam knew he couldn't get beyond the contempt she felt for him. He would never forget the things she said.

It was Marlene's story to tell, but low and behold, Amanda had breached trust and confidence. Within 24 hours, other friends were calling Marlene to congratulate her. Sure, that was nice of them, but it was Marlene's news to share and she was extremely aggravated that Amanda stole that joy from her. She would never trust her again.

They'd been together just a year, but Macy was scarred for life. She had never been in an abusive relationship before, and as odd as it might sound, she didn't recognize the initial, subtle warning signs. So big deal, Mark was a little controlling and jealous. Cute. She liked being wanted and cared for. Before too long, however, it wasn't just a comment or 'check-in' phone call, but physical retribution for Macy's 'misbehavior'. She was glad she was smart and strong enough to get out but she would never forgive Mark for what he did to her.

Vegas? They all went to Vegas? Are you kidding me? Susan's bitterness ran deep as she felt the stinging betrayal of her friends. "How could they have left me out?" she thought. "Why would they do such a thing?" The steady stream of tears continued for an eternity. There was nothing Susan could do to fill the ache of pure agony in her heart.

Sword of the Spirit:

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:14-15

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord.” Leviticus 19:18

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” Matthew 18:21-22

Breaking It Down:

I’ll admit, I didn’t understand what forgiveness was all about. Honestly, I had no clue. So when the truth was revealed, progress came rather quickly. I could hold a grudge with the best of them. Self-protection and preservation, right? If someone hurt me in the past, there was a good chance they’d hurt me again, and if I allowed it, shame on me! Logically, that argument made sense, but it’s a far cry from what the Lord desires. Not only are His instructions contradictory to my previous (unsuccessful) method, but both His rationale and response are profound.

Is there someone you need to bury the hatchet with? Perhaps, a person you don’t like at all, or who has caused you tremendous grief and heartache, but down deep, you’ve been prompted to forgive. You felt it. You heard it. And you can’t let it go.

But you haven’t acted on it. Yet.

What if you don’t have the heart to forgive? The person has wronged you so horrifically and the wounds run deep. The hurt is ongoing and scars haven’t even had time to form. You feel raw. Forgiving at this moment in time seems ludicrous. Impossible.

Or maybe you’re too embarrassed to forgive? How awkward would it be to randomly show mercy to someone you’ve spoken of hating for so long? What would people think? Would it make you look like a wimp? A doormat? Weak? Flighty?

Regardless of your situation, there are a few things I believe God wants you to understand. Forgiving:

- Is the right thing to do.
- Is the selfless approach.
- Is an act of obedience. God calls us to forgive seventy times seven.

- Doesn't mean the other person is right. It means you aren't going to allow them to hurt you any longer.
- Doesn't mean that you have to be someone's friend. Or like them. Or spend time with them. But the anger and bitterness shown in words and actions will fade and the turmoil in your heart will disappear.
- Doesn't mean the offender will or should be without consequence. If laws are broken, justice should be served. And God will serve up His own brand of justice as He sees fit. This isn't your burden to carry.
- Isn't earned. If it were, we'd all be in trouble."

The Benefit in Decluttering Trouble:

Friends, I have personally walked down this road. I have forgiven when my heart didn't want to and my head was screaming 'NO'! I've wiped the slate clean when I still desired to lash out with dozens of arguments on why I'd been wronged, persecuted, lied about... I've gone in the opposite direction, speaking out against hate and anger by swallowing my pride and showing kindness to people I had spoken ill of. And not everyone has been happy or supportive. I've had to 'eat crow', so to speak, and defend my position which may have seemed irrational or weak to others.

But to God, it was strong. Forgiveness is a mighty decision that wields an impressive sword of truth, righteousness, and love. The joy it creates, and yes I said JOY, and the victory of life over death brings a taste far sweeter than any 'crow' I've had to swallow.

Don't waste another precious moment ignoring God's will, pushing aside the prompt that has been placed on your heart. Don't let logic or fear hold you back. Declutter any negative self-talk or doubts. If appropriate and healthy, pick up the phone, knock on the door, or even send a letter to someone today. If God has called you to it, trust that it is beneficial and right to the highest degree. Know that through your faith and obedience, God will keep you, protect you, and richly bless you all the days of your life.

There is freedom, peace, and joy in forgiving that defies all explanation. I pray you'll embrace this richness and blessing today.

*dictionary.reference.com

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