

Forgiveness

Today, I will be speaking about Forgiveness. My prayer is that I can share with you a few insights about how the Natural Man chooses to act when it comes to forgiving VS. how a Disciple of Christ chooses to act, and how we can try to overcome some obstacles that may be holding us back.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?

If he confess his sins before thee and me, and repent, him shall ye forgive.

He who has repented of his sins is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

I will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

Inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.

The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.

I have forgiven thee thy transgression.

Scenario #1: Someone has wronged me and they have apologized to me. Why does it sometimes take so long for me to accept their apology and then freely forgive them and move on?

Natural Man: Sometimes the offense is so huge that we can't even fathom getting past it in this lifetime.

The natural man also tends to add a few extra ingredients to the situation, which then makes everything even more complicated. We tell ourselves: This is the 8th time they've done this. Or they have hurt me in other ways and while this may not be a huge offense by itself, somehow it has sent me into orbit. Or my patience is a little less than usual today. I can't just flip a switch and let it all go - they need to suffer a little bit more because they made me suffer with what they did to me.

Disciple of Christ: (Sister Kristin Yee taught -) A disciple of Christ recognizes that the Savior already claimed these offenses in Gethsemane and on the cross. He took upon Himself not only my sins, but the sins of those who have hurt or offended me. He made a way for me to let go of a vengeful heart.

How this became a reality in my own life: A family member molested me when I was young. Even while this person was going through a lengthy, but genuine and sincere

repentance process, I still had to be around him on a regular basis. This made me incredibly angry for years.

I carried anger, resentment, and spite towards him from the time I was about 10 years old until I was about 15. One day, I realized how exhausting it was to carry all of that negativity around with me every single day. It took so much energy to keep punishing him and reminding him how much I hated him and everything he did. I was tired. And that's when I think that all of Heaven rejoiced . . . "Hooray! She's ready to be humble and to let us help her to HEAL and to be happy again."

Somehow, the Holy Ghost was able to pierce my wounded and angry heart to help me recognize that this was not my true nature and not who I was meant to be. I was a cheerful and an optimistic person. Deep down inside, that's who I knew I really was. But I had been wastefully keeping up the anger parade to remind everyone of my wounds and how they had affected me.

Once I allowed myself to surrender to heaven's help and the healing that comes only in and through Jesus Christ, that's when I began my journey toward forgiveness. I prayed a LOT. I listened. I didn't always agree with the guidance I was being given, because of my "natural man", but I let the Spirit of God begin to work in my heart a little at a time. At long last, I was able to go to my offender and tell him, "I forgive you." Today I am 100% healed from the pain and anger that had so long afflicted me. This is a MIRACLE. Jesus Christ is the mighty giver of miracles, and He blessed me with one in my life - to be able to forgive a mighty offense and then be filled with mighty joy to live the rest of my life.

A disciple of Christ knows where to turn: Not inward, but upward. We need to be patient with ourselves. We can pray for help to let the offense begin to melt out of our heart. We can ask for charity - the Pure Love of Christ - to help us to be less easily offended.

If he confess his sins before thee and me, and repent, him shall ye forgive.

Scenario #2: Someone has wronged me and they are completely ignorant that they have offended me.

Natural Man: The natural man tends to be judgmental and impatient with the offender. We may think to ourselves, "They should have known better." "Why would anyone ever do that or say that?!!"

How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?

Bibi Clark, a lady in my ward back in Idaho Falls, shared this thought during a RS lesson: If we ask someone for \$100 and all they give us is \$5, we need to understand that this might be all that they are capable of giving. They may even want to give more, but still cannot.

We might expect someone to be a certain way, or to act a certain way, but they might not even be capable of it.

Disciple of Christ: A disciple of Christ stops to pray before any negative feelings escalate out of control. Charity is a tool that allows us to more freely forgive, even when the offender hasn't apologized. Charity lifts us above and beyond our own capabilities and allows the Holy Ghost to help guide our thoughts and actions.

Kelsey: I used to work for an oral surgeon in Idaho Falls. I was one of his front desk receptionists for about 2.5 years. Kelsey was hired as another front desk receptionist a few months after I was trained. She drove me nuts. She had a way of getting me to do things that I didn't want to do and I resented her a great deal every day. She acted like the whole world revolved around her.

She would sit at the front desk, playing and fussing with her fingernails, texting on her phone, etc. while I ran around doing just about everything else. In the middle of me doing 98% of the work, Kelsey would call me over to her desk and then ask me to reach the stapler for her, or to run a chart back to Dr. Elison for her.

My other co-worker, Melissa, would slide her wheelie chair over from where she sat at the back desk around the corner, to give me "the look" while she shook her head "no" at me.

I began to dread going to work because I didn't know how to deal with these outrageous requests. So I began to pray for charity. Each morning I would kneel next to my bed and ask for the power of the Holy Ghost to help me that day and to fill my heart with charity so that I could be a better follower of Christ.

The first thing that I noticed was that I didn't feel as annoyed with Kelsey as I used to. I felt happier to be at work all day. On one occasion, I was even able to diplomatically and politely decline her request to do something for her when she was perfectly able to do it for herself. I remember that the words, "No thanks" came out of my mouth relatively easily one day. She wasn't offended . . . Melissa was shocked as she peeked from around the corner of her desk and smiled at me . . . and life went on.

Charity allowed me to suffer long and to be kind. Charity was the tool that helped me rise above my annoyance and frustration, and then to be able to silently forgive Kelsey and move on with my day.

How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seventy times seven.

Scenario #3: Someone has wronged you and they are unwilling to apologize.

Natural Man: This is a really hard one. There are so many layers to consider.

Disciple of Christ: I would invite you to consider Charity as an important tool to help you in this matter. Pray for help to know how to proceed. Read the scriptures regularly and pay attention to any counsel that jumps out at you.

I will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

Scenario #4: You have wronged someone and you need to apologize OR You have done a serious wrong before God and need to ask for His forgiveness.

Natural Man: We may tend to minimize the situation because it's too painful to look ourselves in the eyes and admit our wrong. Our knee-jerk reaction might be to quickly side-step, and look for a reason to blame it on someone else. OR We might be devastated and think that there is no way out of this. We might imagine the whole world whispering horrible things about us because of what we did. We may beat ourselves up and hang on to our guilt, thinking that we need to be more strict with ourselves, or that we don't deserve to be forgiven.

Disciple of Christ: A disciple of Christ recognizes that there is always a way out and a way up. Jesus Christ is right there with the most loving hand extended out to us. He has felt what we are feeling now, and He knows how to help us through our difficult situations. Repentance is a joy and it truly lightens our load. Our Savior made that all possible. When you sincerely repent, you will be forgiven.

Elder K. Brett Nattress: "Have I Truly Been Forgiven?" (Saturday Evening Session)

Danny fell in with a bad group of friends after high school and was soon addicted to meth. But when he heard his brother bear his testimony in church before leaving on a mission, Danny felt something. He felt the love of the Lord and he finally had hope.

Soon after that, Danny came to visit Bishop Nattress. He felt guilty and ashamed, and was really struggling to overcome his weaknesses. He asked, "Can I really be forgiven? Is there really a way back?"

Together, they read the account of Alma the Younger in Alma 36 . Danny's Bishop taught him how Alma the Younger had been exceptionally wicked, but through repentance and forgiveness through our Savior, Jesus Christ, Alma later became a Prophet!

Danny was eventually ready to serve a mission and had great success. His mission president relayed that Danny was the most incredible missionary he had ever seen. And yet, Danny was still racked with torment and guilt from his past mistakes.

Danny went to visit Elder Nattress again. Danny wondered if he had truly been forgiven. Elder Nattress told him: "Danny! Have you looked in the mirror? Have you seen your eyes? They are filled with light, and you are beaming with the Spirit of the Lord. Of course you have been forgiven! You are amazing! Now what you need to do is move forward with your life. Don't look back! Look forward with faith to the next ordinance."

He who has repented of his sins is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more. I have forgiven thee thy transgression.

President Russell M. Nelson: In his Easter message a few weeks ago, Pres. Nelson shared a very personal experience about two babies that he had operated on 60 years ago, and how they had died soon after. He was devastated, along with the parents of those little girls. The parents had held a grudge all this time, but recently, the Hatfields finally agreed to meet with Pres. Nelson. He was able to apologize to them **on bended knee**. And they forgave him.

Pres. Nelson continued: "The Spirit of Forgiveness released them from burdens they had carried for nearly 60 years. There is nothing easy about forgiving those who have disappointed us, hurt us, cheated us, or spread false rumors about us. However, not forgiving others is poison for us. Grudges weigh us down.

"The Savior's counsel is clear: If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. Forgiving others does not mean condoning sinful or criminal behavior. And it certainly does not mean staying in abusive situations. But, when we choose to forgive others, we allow the Lord to remove the poison from our souls. We permit Him to soothe and soften our hearts, so we can see others, especially those who have wronged us, as children of God, and as our brothers and sisters."

He then invites us to prayerfully consider if there is someone that we can try to forgive. He gives us this promise: "I promise that as you forgive, the Savior will relieve you of anger, resentment and pain. The Prince of Peace will bring you peace."