

(Slide #1)

Over and Over Again



Theme: God's forgiveness and our forgiving others

Scripture: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.* Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)

Just look at all of these pencils! There are short pencils, long pencils, and skinny pencils. There are yellow, red, green, and black and white pencils. There are many different shapes, sizes, and colors of pencils but there is one thing that all of these pencils have in common. The eraser is worn off of every one of them.

Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that I make a lot of mistakes. When I make a mistake, I erase it and start

over, and over again, until I get it right! I don't know why I keep these pencils, because as many mistakes as I make, a pencil without an eraser is pretty useless.

These pencils remind me of people. People come in all different sizes, shapes, and colors too, but we all have one thing in common, we all make mistakes!

We make a lot of mistakes. That is why God sent Jesus to die on the cross -- to erase our mistakes. When we do something wrong, we can ask God to forgive us and because of Jesus, He will erase our mistakes and we can start over again, and again, and again. Unlike these pencils, God's eraser never wears out!

Jesus also taught us that we should forgive other people over and over again.

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In Matthew Chapter 18: Verses 21 and 22, the subject of forgiveness came up between Peter and Jesus. The scripture says:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.

That lesson of forgiveness did not begin today. It was the topic of conversation between Peter and Jesus. But moreover, it is a topic of today. How many of us are burdened by the sin of unforgiveness?

I had to remember that statement by Jesus when I came into contact with a cop killer in Houston. The young man shot and killed a Houston Police Officer during a botched robbery at his family store one early Sunday morning. The shooter was caught and brought to jail. At the jail, I was to dress him out (give him his jail clothes before he goes to the cell). He was on the way to death row.

I spoke to him about Jesus and he accepted the Lord as his Savior. That young man wrote a letter to my pastor thanking him for me not judging him and leading him to Christ.

As a policeman it was hard for me. After all, he had killed a member of my law enforcement family. But I had to remember what Jesus said. You must forgive, "Not seven times, but seventy times seven!"

I think Jesus knew that if he said we should forgive seventy times seven, we would never be able to keep count and we would forgive over, and over again, just as he forgives us.

We have to remember the rest of Jesus' advice on forgiveness. I have to remember what he says in Matthew Chapter 6: Verses 14 and 15

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- For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

I make a lot of mistakes. I have made quite a few in my life. But I know that I can be forgiven if I follow the Word of the Lord and forgive others for doing me wrong.

(Tell the story about the man in Houston and his belief that God was not answering his prayers and why)

Finally,

It doesn't matter if we are short or tall, skinny or fat, red, white, yellow, or black; *we all need God's forgiveness.* We also need to remember that Jesus taught that we are to forgive others just as God forgives us. Who are you not forgiving? Do not be like this young man, wandering for three years with hurt and pain, not knowing why his prayers were not answered, come to Jesus right now, and ask him to forgive you as you have forgiven those who have caused you pain.

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As David said:

Psalms 51:10-12

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;

and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence;

and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;

and renew a right spirit within me.

Let us pray:

Dear Jesus, we all make mistakes, thank you for coming to erase those mistakes. Help us to forgive others the same way you forgive us -- over, and over, and over again. Amen.