

FORGIVE

JUST AS JESUS FORGIVES

What is forgiveness?

- The Revell Bible Dictionary lists 3 definitions:
 - 1) to pardon or absolve of wrongdoing
 - 2) to cancel a debt
 - 3) to give up resentment

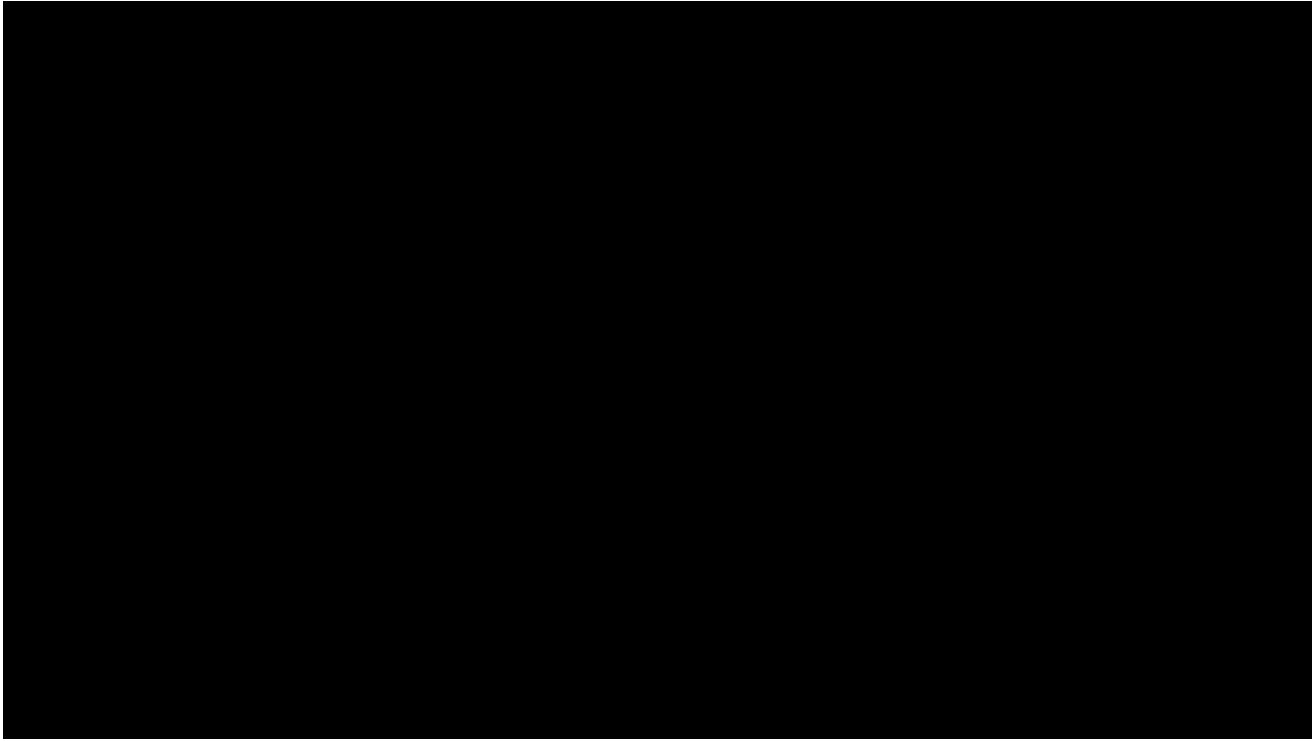
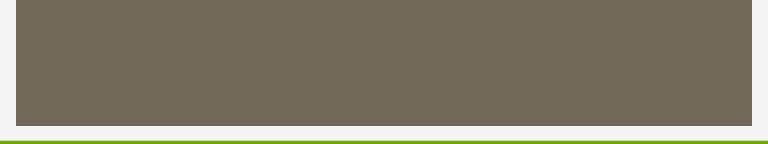
DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE OT

- To seek atonement (Reconciliation to God) for sins
 - Moses sought forgiveness and to make atonement for the Israelites' sins after they worshiped the golden calf, by offering himself in their place. Ex 32:32 "Yet now, if You will forgive their sins, forgive it – but if not blot me out of the book You have written"
 - God also allowed the Israelites to make atonement for their sins by offering burnt sacrifice for God to accept (Lev 1:4)

DEFINITIONS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE NT

- Forgiveness through Christ's Grace
 - Eph 4:32 "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you".
 - God's Grace can touch our heart to allow us to do good to others, including forgiving others, in the same way that Christ forgave us in the ultimate way by dying for our sins.

What recent examples have you seen where someone has demonstrated forgiveness to another?



What recent examples have you seen where forgiveness was not demonstrated?

Example given by Christ about forgiveness

- Read Matthew 18:21-35 – Parable of the unforgiving servant

What Instructions Did Christ Give about Forgiving? Can we Forgive Conditionally?

- “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” Mat6:14-15
- Read also Mark 11:25-26
- Read also Luke 23:34 – showing even the extreme circumstances in which we are to forgive unconditionally

Why do we need to receive God's Forgiveness

- The simple answer is that we are all sinners; (Romans 3:23) and
- The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

What practical steps can we take to make forgiving possible?

- Rely on God's Grace.
- Remember Christ's suffering, and His ultimate example of sacrifice and forgiveness
- Remember the acts of the Apostles and their love to serve and imitate Christ (see for eg St Stephen whilst he was being stoned Acts 7:59-60) Read also 1 Cor4:12-13 about the persecutions the Apostles suffered.
- Reflect on God's promises, that when we forgive we will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit who will work in us.

More practical steps

- It is important to understand that we do not deserve God's forgiveness. Yet He forgives us. In the same way we must forgive others, even if we don't think they deserve it.
- When we forgive someone, we no longer hold the wrong against that person. This not only frees us up to maintain a healthy relationship with that person, but also frees us up from internal resentment, and hurt feelings. Holding it inside however causes resentment to build up, further damaging our relationship with that person. It is also not good for our own health.

Summary

- We do not have the same capacity to forgive that God does.
- God “forgives and forgets”. He pardons our sins in their entirety. To Him, once He forgives it is as though the sin never happened. We do not have the same authority to absolve sins.
- We cannot “forget” in that we cannot remove something from our memory. What we can do is not hold a wrong committed against us as a grudge against the other person. This is what God expects of us when we forgive. This frees us to develop our relationship with others, and more importantly with God.