

GOOD NEWS
for the unsaved
WORLD!

(#148)
God forgives us... we forgive others.

How do we find out the nature of forgiveness?

LOOK IN THE BIBLE!!! We can...

- Read the Bible and look for passages that mention forgiveness.
> OR <
- Look for a list of verses in a Bible concordance.



THEN IT'S JUST A MATTER OF PAYING ATTENTION, TO FIND OUT WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS. We can (for instance) use our Basic Bible Study Method to grow in our understanding what of forgiveness is.

We need to pay attention to:

- ① The words and their meanings.
- ② How those words connect.
- ③ The context of the passage.
- ④ What other passages say.

You may be SURPRISED!

PERHAPS YOU ARE USING THE WORD "FORGIVENESS"
IN WAYS THAT THE BIBLE DOESN'T USE IT.
This may be good or bad...

POSSIBLY GOOD REASONS:

- Since we are translating from one language to another, there may be some legitimate ways that the *English* word is used, in addition to what we find in the Bible.
- In this case, these other concepts may be mentioned in the Bible, but using other words to communicate them.

DEFINITELY BAD REASONS:

- As we have already observed, the world has distorted forgiveness, often twisting and perverting it into the *opposite* of justice.

You may be SURPRISED!

If you attempt to learn what you can from the New Testament Greek language (this is *optional*)...

THE WORDS TRANSLATED AS "FORGIVENESS" MAY SURPRISE YOU!

- **THERE IS NO SPECIFIC GREEK WORD** that is *always* translated as the English word "forgive/forgiveness." Instead, we find words that can be used in a variety of ways, *sometimes* translated that way. (The *context* shows us when it refers to forgiveness.)
- **THIS IS NO REASON FOR CONCERN!** Many English words function this *same* way. In most cases, we can *easily* understand what it refers to, by looking at the context. RANDOM EXAMPLES:

EAT: 1) to consume as food; 2) to use up something; 3) to corrode.

LOVE: 1) strong affection; 2) sexual desire; 3) loyalty, concern; 4) a tennis score; ...

HOUSE: 1) a building where people live; 2) a family; 3) an organization; 4) ...

CATCH: 1) to capture; 2) hold firmly; 3) a hidden difficulty; 4) entanglement; 5) ...

#1 THE MOST COMMON WORD GROUP TRANSLATED AS "FORGIVENESS / TO FORGIVE / ETC." #1

(Based on the NASB translation, which has a greater focus on "word-for-word" translating.)

The **NOUN form** – is almost always translated as "forgiveness" (15 times out of 17).

ἀφεσις aphesis; dismissal, release, fig. pardon: *
—forgiveness(15), free*(1), release(1).

The **VERB form** – could be a source of confusion. It is found nearly 150 times, and is translated as "forgive" (or equivalent) only about 1/3 of the time (49 out of 146). Without further research, some of the other ways it is translated might seem quite confusing; and many have *nothing* to do with "forgiveness."

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* All the Greek Definitions are from: Thomas, R. L. (1998). In New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition. Foundation Publications, Inc.

[The most common VERB for "forgive."]

ἀφίημι aphīēmi; to send away, leave alone, permit:

—abandoned(1), allow(5), allowed(2), divorce(2), forgave(2), forgive(23), forgiven(23), forgives(1), gave ... permission(1), leave(7), leaves(2), leaving(8), left(38), let(9), let ... alone(6), let him have(1), neglected(1), neglecting(2), permit(6), permitted(1), permitting(1), send ... away(1), tolerate(1), uttered(1), yielded(1).

- **Are you confused yet?** At this point, most people would probably stick with the English translation... *and that would be ok.*
- **If you did further research,** you would discover that all of these uses have something in common – namely that something is "**moving away from**" something else, with the emphasis on the "**separation**" of the two.
- **When the issue has to do with SIN** (and sometimes "debt"), the focus is on the "separation" of the *person* from the incurred *guilt*. The *guilt* is "left behind." We translate it as "forgiven."

★ **FORGIVENESS** – as "separation from incurred guilt." ★

- We have sinned; we are guilty – it's not a "feeling" – and we deserve to be condemned.
- In forgiveness, we are *separated* from that guilt. The sin still occurred (it didn't disappear), and it might still bring consequences; but eternal punishment will no longer be experienced by the forgiven person. Instead, the person is "declared righteous" ("justified").
- When the New Testament uses this word, *it always focuses on the guilty person* (their separation from the guilt).
- What must the guilty person do?** Any time Scripture focuses on this issue, it says that the person must repent. (It may use related terms, such as "confess" the sin, or "listen to" the rebuke, etc.) **EXAMPLES:**
 - ✓ Repent – Luke 17:3-4 ✓ Listen to – Matthew 18:15+
 - ✓ Confess – 1 John 1:9 ✓ Also: return, trust, ask.

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- What about the one who forgives (or needs to forgive)?** –
- When a passage mentions the responsibility of the one who does the forgiving, it mainly says two things: "*Do it!*" and "*It must be genuine!*" (= "from the heart, as in Matthew 18:35).
- The one who needs to forgive* may have sins to deal with (attitude or perspective issues). There may be blessings experienced when they *do* forgive.* *But this word is never used to describe or deal with either of these matters.* (These concepts may be connected to *other* words found in Scripture.)

The primary emphasis of this word is on the person who receives the forgiveness; so there are only a *few* passages that focus on the giver – mainly stating the obligation to do so.

* Wanting to "forgive" in order to *attain* blessings would bring into question the "realness" of the forgiveness.

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#2 THE OTHER WORD TRANSLATED AS "TO FORGIVE" (ETC.) #2
 (Based on the NASB translation, which has a greater focus on "word-for-word" translating.)

This occurs only in VERB form – only 23 times, and about half of them (12) are related to forgiveness.

χαρίζομαι charizomai; to show favor, give freely: —bestowed(1), forgave(2), forgive(3), forgiven(4), forgiving(2), freely give(1), gave(1), given(1), graciously forgave(1), granted(4), hand(2), things freely given(1).

- This word (in its various uses) seems to have a greater focus on the *attitude* of the person who is doing the action.
- Applied to forgiveness, it seems to focus on the grace, the generosity, the eagerness to forgive. (As with the other words, it does *not* focus on the various other issues that the forgiver may experience or have to deal with.)

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★ **FORGIVENESS** – as "an expression of graciousness." ★

- This second word is found mainly in passages that involve ① God and his people, or ② people within the Christian family ("brothers"). This doesn't mean we should *avoid* having this attitude when forgiving unsaved people; but there is something special when forgiveness involves restoring relationships *within the Christian family*.

⇒ **Context:** How God's people are to live.

... [graciously] **forgiving** each other, just as in Christ God [graciously] **forgave** you.
Ephesians 4:32b (NIV)

⇒ **Context:** How God's people are to interact.

[God graciously] **forgave** us all our sins, ...
... [graciously] **forgive** one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.
... *as the Lord* [graciously] **forgave** you.
Colossians 2:13b; 3:13b (NIV)

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SUMMARY

MOST of the "forgive" verses emphasize the *separation* of the individual from the guilt of his sin.

A FEW "forgive" verses have a greater emphasis on the *attitude* of the one doing the forgiving.

BASED ON HOW THE BIBLE USES THESE WORDS...

⇒ **OUR GOAL** is to better understand the nature of forgiveness.

- English translations will be sufficient for this, though we may gain some additional insights from the N. T. Greek.
- Either way, we can be blessed, and can thank God for what we *learn*... and for the ability he gives us, to *obey* any obligations that are found in the passages.

OUR PRESENT FOCUS: The relationship between God's forgiveness of us, and our willingness to forgive others.

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AN ISSUE WE INTRODUCED LAST TIME...

God's forgiveness of US is to influence our willingness to forgive OTHER PEOPLE.

Forgiving as God does is part of what it means to "follow Jesus." Those not following him (therefore, not forgiving others) are not saved.

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and **forgive us** our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil."
Matthew 6:9-13 (ESV)

HAVE YOU EVER PRAYED "THE LORD'S PRAYER"?

Note what this says about God's and your forgiveness!

[Scripture often describes sin and punishment in terms of "debt" and "payment."]

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LEARNING FROM "THE LORD'S PRAYER."

Here is Jesus' explanation of that "forgiveness" line:

For 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.
Matthew 6:14-16 (ESV)

At the Day of Judgment, what can we expect from God?

- ⇒ Those who are following Jesus:
 - At the present time, they forgive others.
 - At the judgment, God will pronounce them "forgiven."
- ⇒ Those who are NOT following Jesus:
 - At the present time, they DON'T forgive others.
 - At the judgment, God WON'T pronounce them "forgiven."

It's not a matter of earning salvation, but living it!

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LEARNING FROM COMMANDS ABOUT FORGIVENESS.

... **forgive** one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**
Colossians 3:13b (NIV)

... **forgiving** each other, just as in Christ God **forgave** you. **Follow God's example** ...
Ephesians 4:32b-5:1a (NIV)

- As we have already pointed out, the "forgive" words in these two passages come from the New Testament word that emphasizes a generous forgiving attitude, an eagerness to forgive.
- Both of these passages tell us to follow God's example. So we should be asking:
"HOW did God forgive us?"

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- Do we want to be forgiven the *same way* we forgive others? Maybe we should also be asking ...
"WHAT TYPE of forgiveness do we want?"

... and **forgive us** our debts, as **we also have forgiven** our debtors.
Matthew 6:12 (ESV)

Forgive, and you will be **forgiven**.
Luke 6:37b (CSB)

- Forgiving others is so important that we shouldn't even pray until we've dealt with any forgiveness issues we may have!
"What is our ATTITUDE about forgiving others?"

"But when you are praying, first **forgive** anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will **forgive** your sins, too."
Mark 11:25 (NLT)

[We can at least deal with our attitude toward those who have offended us – even if we cannot (at that moment) interact with them.]

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LEARNING FROM EXAMPLES ABOUT FORGIVENESS.

⇒ **ATTITUDE/DESIRE: The heart-desire for people to be forgiven.**
[This doesn't guarantee that they *received* forgiveness.]
Then Jesus said, "Father, **forgive** them, because they do not know what they are doing."
Luke 23:34a (CSB)

While they were stoning Stephen, he ... knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, **do not hold this sin against them!**"
Acts 7:59a, 60a (CSB)

⇒ **ACTIONS: Actually forgiving the repentant sinner.**
[This person had been "handed over to Satan" with the goal of bringing him to repentance (1 Corinthians 5:3-5).]
When you **forgive** this man, I **forgive** him, too. And when I **forgive** whatever needs to be **forgiven**, I do so with Christ's authority for your benefit, so that Satan will not outsmart us.
2 Corinthians 2:10–11a (NLT)

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Jesus teaches: About attitude and responsibility.

THIS FOCUSES ON OUR ATTITUDE

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 (NIV)

* Can also be translated as: *seventy times seven.*

THIS FOCUSES ON OUR RESPONSIBILITY AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY

"If your brother sins, rebuke him. If he **repents**, **forgive** him. Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times returns to you saying, 'I **repent**,' you must **forgive** him."
Luke 17:3b-4 (NET)

The issue isn't a specific *number* of times (7, 77, or even 490), but the *attitude*. We are to be gracious and eager to forgive, if they repent, *just like God was with us.*

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Jesus teaches: About those who *don't* forgive others.

(The parable of the wicked servant, found in Matthew 18:23-35.)

"... his master said to him, 'You wicked servant! I **forgave** you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. So also my heavenly Father will do to you **unless every one of you forgives** his brother or sister **from your heart.**"
Matthew 18:32b-35 (CSB)

In this parable, the servant might be able (theoretically) to pay off the debt. But when it comes to sin against *God*, even the *smallest* of sins is so great, that it will take all *eternity* to pay off the debt.

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FORGIVENESS OF SINS: It began with **JUSTIFICATION**.
But it is an ongoing condition that influences how we interact with others (including those we need to forgive).
In the future, our forgiveness (by God) will be reaffirmed at the Day of Judgment.

YOUR MISSION!

FORGIVING and **FOLLOWING JESUS** go together.

BOTH will characterize your life... or **NEITHER** will.

Our recommendation? Choose BOTH!

⇒ God has given you his **Word**, so you can learn to do BOTH!

⇒ He offers you the **Holy Spirit**, to empower you to do BOTH!

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FORGIVENESS verse list. (For further research, if desired.)
(Based on the NASB translation. Other translations may be slightly different. The word may occur multiple times in a single verse.)

⇒ **The most common word group; focus on the individual who is forgiven.**

- [NOUN] Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4; Mark 3:29; Luke 1:77; Luke 3:3; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31; Acts 10:43; Acts 13:38; Acts 26:18; Ephes. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:18
- [VERB] Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 9:2; Matthew 9:5-6; Matthew 12:31-32; Matthew 18:21; Matthew 18:27; Matthew 18:32; Matthew 18:35; Mark 2:5; Mark 2:7; Mark 2:9-10; Mark 3:28; Mark 4:12; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 5:20-21; Luke 5:23-24; Luke 7:47-49; Luke 11:4; Luke 12:10; Luke 17:3-4; Luke 23:34; John 20:23; Acts 8:22; Romans 4:7; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:12
- Luke 6:37 – a different N.T. word; similar meaning; "pardon" in the NASB.

⇒ **The word that emphasizes the attitude of the forgiver.**

- [VERB ONLY] Luke 7:42-43; 2 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 12:13; Ephes. 4:32; Col. 2:13; Col. 3:13

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⇒ **OLD Testament verse list. (From several Hebrew words.)**
(WE WILL LOOK AT SOME OF THESE NEXT TIME.)

- Genesis 50:17; Exodus 10:17; Exodus 32:32; Exodus 34:7; Leviticus 4:20; Leviticus 4:26; Leviticus 4:31; Leviticus 4:35; Leviticus 5:10; Leviticus 5:13; Leviticus 5:16; Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:7; Leviticus 19:22; Numbers 14:18-19; Numbers 15:25-26; Numbers 15:28; Numbers 30:5; Numbers 30:8; Numbers 30:12; Deut. 21:8; Deut. 29:20; Joshua 24:19; 1 Samuel 25:28; 1 Kings 8:30; 1 Kings 8:34; 1 Kings 8:36; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Kings 8:50; 2 Kings 24:4; 2 Chron. 6:21; 2 Chron. 6:25; 2 Chron. 6:27; 2 Chron. 6:30; 2 Chron. 6:39; 2 Chron. 7:14; Neh. 4:5; Neh. 9:17; Psalm 25:18; Psalm 32:1; Psalm 32:5; Psalm 65:3; Psalm 78:38; Psalm 79:9; Psalm 85:2; Psalm 86:5; Psalm 99:8; Psalm 130:4; Isaiah 2:9; Isaiah 6:7; Isaiah 22:14; Isaiah 27:9; Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 18:23; Jeremiah 31:34; Jeremiah 36:3; Ezekiel 16:63; Daniel 9:9; Daniel 9:19; Hosea 1:6

Verses that are translated as "pardon" (a parallel concept):

- Exodus 23:21; Exodus 34:9; Numbers 14:19-20; 1 Samuel 15:25; 2 Kings 5:18; 2 Chron. 30:18; Job 7:21; Psalm 25:11; Psalm 103:3; Isaiah 27:9; Isaiah 55:7; Jeremiah 5:1; Jeremiah 5:7; Jeremiah 33:8; Jeremiah 50:20; Lament. 3:42; Amos 7:2; Micah 7:18

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Credits

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