



MYTHS *of* FORGIVENESS

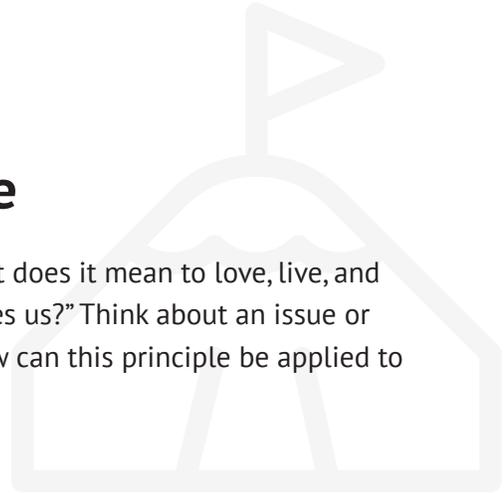
SUMMARY | What do you know about forgiveness? These are some beliefs we may encounter: forgiveness is for ourselves; forgiveness needs to be unconditional; to forgive is to forget, even if it means letting the offender off the hook. These myths about forgiveness are usually half-truths and leave the impression that they're all we need to know about breaking the power of wrongs. Like half-truths about spiritual salvation that imply being saved is all about going to heaven when we die, the myths of forgiveness can cause us to miss the richness of what Jesus wants to bring to our hearts and relationships. Jesus is the One who helps us understand that there are both conditional and unconditional factors that need to be considered. At the heart of His thoughts on forgiveness is the question, "What does love desire, require, and offer?"

This Week's Discussion Questions

1. Why would Jesus say that if we don't forgive others, His Father won't forgive us? (see Matthew 6:14–15). If God is loving by nature, does that imply that in some sense withholding forgiveness can be an act of love?
2. When Jesus was asked by His disciples how often they were to forgive others, why do you think He left them with the thought that there's no limit to the number of times His followers are to forgive those who own up to their wrongs and desire our forgiveness? (Luke 17:1–6). Why do you think He went on to say that even the smallest amount of faith can uproot a mulberry tree?
3. When Jesus said from His cross, "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34), was that the same as if He'd said to the crowd, the religious leaders, and His executioners, "I forgive you"? What does love have to do with His desire that they be forgiven? Do you hear a heart of forgiveness a short time later when He says to one of the thieves dying next to Him, "Today you will be in paradise" (v.43)? What changed?
4. How can focusing on the question "What does love desire, require and offer?" help you to understand there's no divine bitterness or vengeance in view when Scripture links confession and forgiveness? (2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 1:9)

Challenge

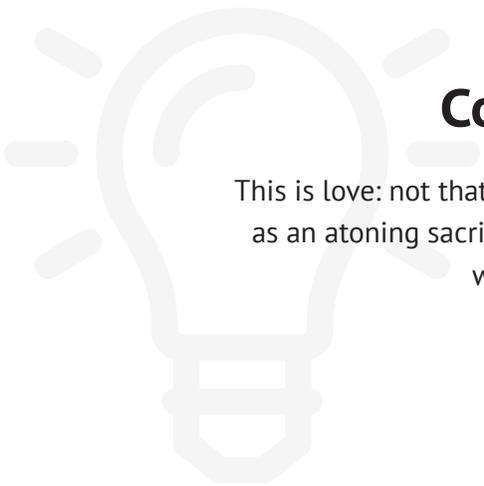
During this series, we discuss the question, “What does it mean to love, live, and forgive in the presence of the God who first loves us?” Think about an issue or disagreement you’ve had with another person. How can this principle be applied to that situation?



Commit To Memory

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:10-11



Prayer

Father in heaven, please help us to hear Your love in everything Your Son said about our sin and forgiveness. Give us the wisdom to see and admit our wrongs. For love’s sake—and above all for Your sake— give us the courage to be honest with those who’ve hurt us, remembering that those who’ve been forgiven much, love much.

Amen.

