

## **Love is Forgiving**

(Based on the study, Loving as Jesus Loves, by Sharon A. Steele.)

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Read and reflect on Matthew 9:1-8. Why do you think Jesus extended forgiveness before healing the paralyzed man? Was this simply a teaching opportunity or was there more to it? Does the reaction of the onlookers surprise you? Why? Why not? What does this passage teach about Jesus and forgiveness? Why is it important to understand this? According to Jesus, what was the man's healing intended to demonstrate? How did it do that?

Read and reflect on John 8:3-11. Of what sin was the woman accused? What punishment was prescribed in the Law of Moses for this sin? Why? How did Jesus respond to her accusers? What standard for condemning or judging others does He present? What happens when we practice this and look at our own sin first? How did the accusers respond? Why do you think the eldest accusers walked away first? According to this passage, how are we to respond to the sin we witness in others? Do you have any thoughts on what Jesus might have been writing in the sand? How does Jesus respond to the woman? What do His words tell us about how He understands forgiveness?

Read and reflect on Matthew 27:26-31 and then Luke 23:33-34. What abuses and wrongdoing did Jesus suffer as He neared His death? Who was responsible for those abuses? How did Jesus respond to their cruelty? Why? What effect do you think His words of forgiveness would have had on those guilty of mistreating Him? Do you think it would have been easy for Jesus to offer that forgiveness? Why? Why not?

Read and reflect on 1 John 1:8-10. What does this passage teach about sin? What does it teach about God's forgiveness? How important has this promise been to you? What is the prerequisite to receiving God's forgiveness? Is this easy for you or difficult? Why? According to this passage what goes hand-in-hand with God's forgiveness? Why is this important to remember as we seek God's forgiveness? Is there any unconfessed sin in your life presently? What is this passage encouraging you to do about it? Take time now to prayerfully listen to the Spirit's convicting voice and respond in faith that He will forgive, as promised.

Read and reflect on Colossians 3:12-14. What character qualities are God's people to exhibit? What spiritual practices are called for? What specific instructions are given in relation to forgiveness? What is meant by "forgive as the Lord forgave you"? How does this mindset inspire forgiveness in you?

Read and reflect on Matthew 6:14-15. What is the stated relationship between our willingness to forgive others and God's ability to grant us forgiveness? Why do you think this relationship exists? In what ways does this challenge you? In what ways does it inspire you?

Read and reflect on Matthew 18:21-35. What do you think is behind Peter's question in verse 21? Have you ever found yourself asking that question or one similar? If so, what was the circumstance/situation that prompted it? Did your question seem reasonable in the circumstance? Does Jesus' response here seem reasonable? Why? Why not? What do you think Jesus is actually instructing through both His direct answer (verse 22) and His follow-up story (the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, verses 23-35)? What can you learn from the forgiving King (Master) in the parable? What can you learn from the unforgiving servant and the over-arching impacts of his unforgiving spirit? What are the consequences of unforgiveness according to verse 35?

Think on times when you personally found it difficult to forgive. In what ways did having an unforgiving spirit impact you and others? Think on times when you were quick to forgive. What was the impact on you and others? Which path proved most life-giving?

In the parable, the King (Master) represents God. He readily offers forgiveness at the outset but then withdraws it when that forgiveness, in turn, is not extended to others. What important lessons are found in this? As people who have received great forgiveness from God, what are we to do?

What will you do, in light of this study, to ensure you live in a spirit of forgiveness more consistently? Is there someone you need to forgive? Is there someone from whom you need to seek forgiveness? What specific action steps will you take?