



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 43, No. 37, September 20 , 2016 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is **a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

KEEPING SCORE ... or ... FORGIVING?

JESUS: "... *Forgive, and you will be forgiven*" (Luke 6:37). **JESUS:** "*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*" (Matthew 6:14-15). **The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul:** "*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*" (Colossians 3:13) Ephesians 4:32 states that Christians are to be those who are, "... **forgiving one another, EVEN AS** God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." In 1 Corinthians 13:5 we are told by God through Paul that, "**love... keeps no record of wrongs.**" "**Love ... doesn't keep score of the sins of others.**" **Love does not keep score because** love has a bad memory. NO! INSTEAD, love finds a way to forgive the sins of others because those whose hearts have been FLOODED with the love of God have themselves been forgiven! (Romans 5:5)

JESUS provides the supreme model of forgiveness! When JESUS hung on the cross, condemned to death by evil men who plotted to murder him, who produced lying witnesses to convict him, as He surveyed the howling mob assembled to cheer His suffering, Jesus the Son of God,

the One who knew no sin, in His dying moments uttered words that still ring across the centuries: ***“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”*** (Luke 23:34). **Those 11 words sweep away all our shabby excuses.** They reveal the barrenness of our heart. Many of us say, “If only the people who hurt me would show some remorse, some sorrow, then I would forgive them.” But since that rarely happens, we use that as an excuse to continue in our bitterness, our anger, and/or our desire to get even.

IN CONTRAST, BEHOLD JESUS ON THE CROSS: The crowd laughed, mocked, cheered, and jeered; and those who passed by hurled insults at him. They taunted him, *“If you are the King of Israel, come down from the cross and save yourself.”* Let us be clear on this point. When JESUS died, the people who put Him to death were quite pleased with themselves.

No one said, “I was wrong. This is a mistake. We were such fools.” **And yet JESUS prayed,** ***“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”***

LIKEWISE, WE MUST PRAY like Jesus in relation to (1) People who hurt us deliberately and repeatedly, (2) To those who intentionally attack us, (3) To those who casually, OR thoughtlessly, OR carelessly wound us.

ALSO, we must pray forgiveness on behalf of those closest to us, and on behalf of our husband or wife, our children, parents, friends, neighbors, our brothers and sisters, and our fellow Christians.

CHRISTIANS: HAVING BEEN LOVED— we love! **CHRISTIANS:** HAVING BEEN FORGIVEN— we forgive, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven us!

IF WE ARE UNWILLING to walk in the steps of Jesus, we are false disciples!

WHAT FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN:

- 1. It does not mean** approving of the evil someone else did.
- 2. It does not mean** pretending that evil never took place.

3. **It does not mean** making excuses for other people's bad behavior.
4. **It does not mean** justifying evil so that sin somehow becomes less sinful.
5. **It does not mean** overlooking abuse.
6. **It does not mean** denying that others tried to hurt you repeatedly.
7. **It does not mean** refusing to press charges when a crime has been committed.
8. **It does not mean** forgetting the wrong that was done.
9. **It does not mean** pretending that you were never hurt.
10. **It does not mean** that all negative consequences of sin are canceled.

IT DOES REQUIRE deep humility— For example, I could be wrong in my assessment! I may have misjudged the words, attitudes, and/or actions of the person I have been claiming has sinned against me!

MORE ABOUT FORGIVENESS: It is quite possible to speak kind words of forgiveness while continuing to inwardly harbor anger and bitterness. REAL Forgiveness begins in the heart and then eventually works its way outward.

FORGIVENESS IS a conscious choice to release others from their sins against me **SO THAT I WILL REVEAL JESUS** to a watching world; **SO THAT I can be redemptive**; and **SO THAT I can be set free**— even if others never repent and are never set free in their own hearts, FORGIVENESS sets me free to live in peace and JOY!

Forgiveness does not deny the pain; it does not change the past, but it does break the cycle of bitterness that binds me to the wounds of yesterday. FORGIVING REVEALS CHRIST-LIKENESS!

IN A VERY POWERFUL WAY, forgiveness allows me to let go and move on and even REDEMPTIVELY INVEST in the life of the one who offended me, in accordance with the powerful assignments of **Romans 12:14-21!!**

ABOVE ALL ELSE, Christian forgiveness is rooted in and empowered by, ‘forgiving EVEN AS God for CHRIST’S SAKE has forgiven me!’ (Ephesians 4:32)

BUT WHAT IF THE OFFENDER DOES NOT CONFESS AND REPENT?

I can forgive even when other people make no confession. **I can forgive** when the other person has done nothing to earn forgiveness because forgiveness is like salvation— FORGIVENESS is a gift that is freely given, it cannot be earned. **I can forgive** and the other person may never even know about it. **I can forgive** without saying, “I forgive you” because forgiveness is a matter of the heart. AT THIS POINT, we are primarily speaking of **VERTICAL FORGIVENESS**.

Vertical forgiveness is between you and God, where you IN YOUR HEART forgive the offender EVEN AS GOD has forgiven you; and where IN YOUR LIFESTYLE you go forward, not only forgiving but blessing, doing good, loving, and praying for even your worst enemies! (Matthew 5:44-48; Romans 12:14-21)

HORIZONTAL FORGIVENESS, (where you actually say the words “*I do forgive you!*” to one who has offended you), **is spoken on those occasions when** the person actually comes and asks for forgiveness. This is based on the clear teaching of Jesus in Luke 17:1-5.

IT IS EASY and too common to STUMBLE AT FORGIVING OTHERS

As another has said: ***“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.”*** In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus tells a story, which, (to modernize it!), is about a man who owed his boss a vast debt that in today’s terms would be something like \$1 million. Somehow he had run up this enormous debt and somehow he had managed to spend all the money. When the boss demanded his money, the man unashamedly begged to be forgiven. He even promised to pay the money back.

The boss forgave him the whole debt— just wiped the slate clean. Soon after that, the man who had been forgiven such an enormous sum saw a fellow who owed him a tiny debt— something like \$100. **When the TINY DEBT fellow couldn't pay,**

THE HUGE DEBT FELLOW had the TINY DEBT fellow thrown into jail. However, people heard about it and told the boss who got angry and had the big debt man thrown into jail to be tortured until he paid back the amount that had been forgiven. **The King James Version says that he was turned over to the “TORMENTORS.”**

The moral of the story is very clear: ***“This is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart,”*** (Matthew 18:35).

APPLICATIONS:

1. There are multitudes who hear the GRACIOUS, FORGIVING WORDS of the gospel and for a period of time, they rejoice. **HOWEVER, they have no inward transformation...** By and by they are OFFENDED by the Word of God. (Mark 4:16-17)

In contrast, saving encounters with Jesus leave us motivated and empowered to walk in His steps. (In this account, the Big Debt fellow is OFFENDED by the clear WORD OF GOD that calls for those forgiven, to forgive, Ephesians 4:29-32.)

2. Applying this story of Jesus, we should hear: **“What happened to that man will happen to those who do not CHOOSE to forgive.”** What tormentors? THE hidden tormentors of **anger and bitterness** that eat your insides out; THE tormentors of **frustration and malice** that give you ulcers and high blood pressure and migraine headaches and lower back pain; THE tormentors that make you lie awake at night on your bed stewing over what others did or did not do or say; THE tormentors of an unforgiving heart that stalk your footsteps day and night, that never leave your side, that suck every bit of joy from your life. **Why?**

Because you/we will not forgive from the heart. It still happens today, just as Jesus said, because of refusing to forgive.

IN OUR NATURAL STATE, we are like the unforgiving servant. We stand before Almighty God with our sins piled up like a mountain. We come as debtors to God, with empty hands, and we say, **“I cannot pay.”**

The GOSPEL of God’s rich mercy, love, and grace is preached, “My Son has paid the debt. You owe me nothing.” Then we rise from the pew and walk outside the church professing to have received God’s mercy, love, grace, and forgiveness. HOWEVER, before we get to our car we see a man who has done us wrong and we want to grasp him by the throat and say, **“Pay me right now!”**

No wonder we are so tormented. **No wonder** we are so angry and bitter. **No wonder** we have problems in churches and homes. **No wonder** we can’t get along. **No wonder** the marriage is destroyed; the church is divided and/or split.

AT THE ROOT, THERE ARE ONE OF TWO POSSIBILITIES:

EITHER, we have never experienced the forgiveness of God; OR, having experienced God’s forgiveness, we presently grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. (IF the latter is the case, we can either proceed with repentance of our sin; or... the sure CHASTENING of God WILL BE coming! (Heb. 12:4-14)

Forgiveness is not an optional part of the Christian life. It is a necessary part of what it means to be a Christian.

Here is A REAL TEST as to whether we are merely religious or born again:

1. When the Holy Spirit has flooded our hearts with the love of God, (Romans 5:5), we have the ability and a willingness to forgive. We are called to forgive even as we have been forgiven! (Ephesians 4:32) Those gripped by HAVING BEEN FORGIVEN, will forgive.

2. We can't judge the spirituality of a Christian, (me or others!), on the basis of his/her prayers, since praying may be done for its effect on the listeners. **Nor can** we measure a person's spiritual status by the loudness of his "Amens!" and "Hallelujahs!" **The generosity** of one's giving is not

an infallible test for it may be done for personal recognition or to ease one's conscience. **Faithful attendance** at worship or participation in church programs is not reliable either for they may all be done because of family, community, or peer pressures.

A sure test of the depth of, (and even the genuineness of), our relationship with God is found in our willingness to show compassion and to forgive those who hurt or wrong us.

AS BY GRACE, we follow Jesus, we walk in His FORGIVING STEPS!

We are never more like Jesus than when we forgive. When we forgive others, we demonstrate powerful evidence that we are the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit!

YES, A GENUINE CHRISTIAN can have serious battles with the call to forgive. Let us remember this: **“I will never be free until I REPENT of my own sin; and forgive others of theirs!”**

TO GROW IN FORGIVING, WE MUST CULTIVATE soft hearts and humility. MAYBE you have been deeply hurt by things others have said, done, or not done. Maybe you have been attacked, maligned, mistreated, abused, sexually assaulted, ridiculed, belittled, publicly humiliated, physically beaten; and maybe these things have been done deliberately, repeatedly, and viciously.

IT IS EASY to choose to become hard on the inside to protect ourselves from any further pain. But that hardness makes it difficult for us to hear the gentle call of the Holy Spirit. **We need soft hearts to hear his voice.**

WHAT CAN SOFTEN OUR HEARTS?

Behold Jesus, the Lamb of God, suffering for our own sin, making propitiation for our sin!

We also need HUMILITY! Let us simply bow in submission to Jesus who calls us to walk in His steps.

We live by FAITH, acting upon the Word of God... and not by our FEELINGS! [The above article is greatly edited from a message by Ray Pritchard]

ABOUNDING Mercy, Grace, Love, and PEACE to all in Christ!

James Bell www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Contact Bradley at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS: ☐ **6:30pm— Children** Ministry/activities; ☐ **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these... enter via double doors by gym) ☐ **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE...** Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Meets EVERY OTHER TUESDAY: **Studies in the Gospel of Luke! NEXT: September 27 @ 11:00am;** Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! {Study in **ROMANS**}... **Come to back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru** awning... walk forward... till you smell the coffee!

SUNDAY SERVICES, September 25

9:30am- Sunday School

10:45am- Worship Service & Children's Church

NOON 'Covered-dish' Lunch / 1:00pm Service

**5:30pm-7:30pm— FAITHFUL MEN'S
FELLOWSHIP/STUDY/EQUIPPING**

**SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL— *Uniting Church, Home, and
School in CHRIST!***

**For the 2016-2017 school term we are offering Second through
Twelfth grades.** Children need the Home, the Church, and the School to
model and teach the same basic philosophy of life. ***Children are like
young plants in a garden— they must be protected.***

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>