

# **“A DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT – BE FORGIVING”**

*Presented by*

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As I reflect on many years of being around “God’s people,” there are an abundance of highlights. However, there are also some troublesome “lowlights” that constantly plague the Body of Christ.

Lack of biblical unity is always a key issue. Do believers in a local church really practice “unity from the Spirit”? Lack of biblical “outreach” is another trouble spot. Rather than loving lost people, so many in the church are disgusted with them and are isolated more than ever.

Yet, the greatest weakness in the church today, from my point of view, is the inability of most believers to truly be “forgiving.” The lack of forgiveness has caused great hurt in so many congregations. Some churches have closed their doors because of the results of “unforgiveness” in the ranks.

Remember this, you are most like the Lord Jesus when you give and forgive.

# THE COMMAND

Ephesians 4:32

- The word “forgive” = to **graciously** pardon another person from all claims or previous grievous **injustices**.
- This is a **command** to all believers.

# AN ILLUSTRATION

Matthew 18:21-35

- Peter asked a legitimate question: How many **times**?
- Jesus answers in a way which **supersedes** the teaching of the rabbis.

## THE PARABLE

- A king desires to **settle** financial accounts with his slaves.
- The first slave has a **huge** debt, and is completely forgiven his debt!
- The first slave then is **unwilling** to forgive his fellow slave.
- The second slave begs for forgiveness also, but is **attacked** instead of forgiven.

- The first slave then faces severe consequences...
  - his fellow slaves are extremely **troubled**.
  - his sin becomes very **public**.
  - he is **punished** for his “crime.”
  - his punishment is **forever**.

## MEANING OF THE PARABLE

- The first slave represents every **unsaved** person.
- This slave also represents one who is “**freed**” at salvation and completely forgiven.
- The second slave represents **other** believers.
- The saved “slave,” who has been completely forgiven, **refuses** to forgive a fellow servant.
- This **violates** everything a believer stands for!

## THE ACT OF FORGIVING

- Realize that **pain** and **suffering** always precede forgiveness.
- When you forgive it is always in **obedience** to God’s Word.

- Realize that many times the person you forgive will not “**accept**” your forgiveness.
- Understand that to “forgive” does not mean to **condone**, excuse or **remove** the consequences of a sinful act.
- The act of forgiveness allows the “forgiver” to be **clean** before God.
- To be unforgiving puts a believer in a “state” of divine **discipline**.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

- Are you **aware** of the enormous debt you owed because of your sin?
- Who in your **life**, right now, needs to be forgiven?
- Are you “**ripe**” for God’s discipline because of an unforgiving attitude?