

The Door Is Closed To The Unforgiving Spirit

A cornerstone to seeking God with honesty and integrity is that we must remove anger and resentment from our hearts. There is nothing that will keep us away from God more certainly than a failure to forgive those who have wronged us. Jesus said simply in Matthew 6:15, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." It is only the merciful who will receive mercy. Matthew 5:7 is proof of that when Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." James also writes about this in James 2:13, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

There is so much more to a truly merciful spirit. A merciful spirit is not one who that will grudgingly forgive others when they come to us for mercy; in other words, there should be no resentment towards the other when we forgive. Jesus called upon us to be people of character, that we will not rest until broken relationships are mended, even if we have to be the ones who take the initiative. The circumstances do not matter, whether the relationship has been broken by our own sin, or by that of the other party, or (as is usually the case) a certain amount of wrongdoing on both sides. In all cases we are to seek the other person out and do all we can to repair what has been broken. Remember Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus preaches, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Or look at Matthew 18:15 where Jesus says, "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."

Paul wrote in Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." The beginning of the verse where tells that being merciful requires doing so much more than we think is necessary. If God had thought of nothing more than what He "had" to do, He certainly would not have given His Son's life to make repair our relationship with Him. It was, after all, we who had broken the relationship, yet His love did not complain about having to do more than was "necessary" to fix it. He willingly offered Jesus without any form of resentment.

But think about this also: quite often we are wrong in our judgment that the other person has done anything to us that needs to be forgiven. When looking at granting forgiveness on those who wrong us, we need to guard our hearts against condescension. Perhaps it is actually we who need to be forgiven. Or perhaps we have simply misjudged the other person's actions and everything that has occurred has been a misunderstanding. Having a forgiving spirit means not only being eager to forgive, but eager to believe the best in others and being humble enough to admit it when we've overestimated the wrongs that others have done.

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