

26 Myths of Forgiveness

Misunderstood and confusing concepts entrenched in Christian teaching

From the upcoming book series,

Unraveling the Myths of Forgiveness: *Why Jesus never said to forgive your enemies and why the whole world thinks He did!*

by James Scott Berry

1. **MYTH:** Holding on to “unforgiveness” in your heart will make you angry and bitter.

TRUTH: Holding on to unforgiveness in your heart can NEVER make you angry or bitter because you are already bitter from the moment you get hurt and do not rely on God’s grace. Unforgiveness cannot and does not ever “lead you there.” You are ALREADY there. It is never unforgiveness that makes you bitter. It is the opposite. It is always bitterness that makes you unwilling to forgive!
(Hebrews 12:15)

2. **MYTH:** Forgiveness is as much for you as it is for your offender because “Forgiveness” is releasing oneself (letting go) of anger and bitterness.

TRUTH: Forgiveness is NEVER for God the giver or for you the giver. In the Bible, Forgiveness NEVER means “letting go of anger and bitterness.” If it did mean this, then we could separate forgiveness and reconciliation, which, while many do, God does not.

3. **MYTH:** Forgiveness does not mean that an offender is no longer guilty, accountable, or that we must be reconciled.

TRUTH: Yes it does! These things are exactly what biblical forgiveness does mean, both when God forgives our sins from us or when we forgive others of their sins. God never separates forgiveness and reconciliation. He is always immediately reconciled with the person whose sin He forgives. Biblical forgiveness always results in some degree of reconciliation.

4. **MYTH:** To forgive means to let go of a grudge or let go of anger and bitterness

TRUTH: To *aphiemi*/forgive means to lift off, remove, send away, leave behind, forsake, put away, or “divorce” the sin and debt from the person (as in removing chains or handcuffs from them, not from ourselves.) In certain non-egregious circumstances (Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4), *charizoma*/forgive means to overlook the sin without the necessity of repentance, not to overlook the person. (See Young’s or Strong’s Concordance of the Bible or other translation helps.)

5. **MYTH:** God always forgives people, so we must always forgive people
TRUTH: God never forgives anyone. He never forgives people, He only forgives sin from people. (According to His grace and calling, we must repent! He forgives people OF THEIR SIN.) Throughout the Bible, in the Greek and the Hebrew, the direct object of God's forgiveness is never you or me, but is always our sin that is forgiven or removed. WE are never the direct object of God's removal/ forgiveness. SIN is the direct object of God's forgiveness. People are always the INDIRECT object of God's forgiveness.
This makes perfect sense since if we use the Biblical definitions of the word "aphiemi/forgive:" To SEND AWAY (CAST), LIFT OFF, REMOVE, DIVORCE, or FORSAKE.
- God does not send us away, He sends our sin away from us.
 - God does not cast us into the sea, God casts our sin into the sea.
 - God does not lift us off, He lifts our sin off of us.
 - God does not remove us, He removes our sin from us.
 - God does not divorce us, God divorces our sin from us.
 - God does not cover us, He covers our sin (He atones for our sin)
 - God does not overlook us, He overlooks our sin (only non-egregious sins in this one context)
 - God does not forsake us, He forsakes our sin.
 - God does not forgive/remove us, He forgives our sin from us.
 - WE ARE NOT FORGIVEN, WE ARE SAVED.
 - OUR SINS ARE NOT SAVED, THEY ARE SENT AWAY;
OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN FROM US!
6. **MYTH:** We can aphiemi/forgive someone whether they want forgiveness or not.
TRUTH: Neither God nor we can remove the chains of sin of someone who loves their sin or denies that they are chained and guilty of sin.
7. **MYTH:** Forgiveness is the conduit through which we release anger and bitterness.
TRUTH: Biblically, it is meekness (trust and mourning to God) through which we release anger and bitterness, never forgiveness. (Matthew 11:29, Hebrews 12:15)
8. **MYTH:** Myth: You must forgive all offenders 70 x 7 (Matthew 18:22).
TRUTH: In this scriptural and cultural context, Jesus makes it very clear that we forgive ONLY the sin of offenders who have done teshuva (repentance). In Peter's Jewish question context, repentance must be done between 3 and 1000 times per sin before any transaction of forgiveness can transpire!!!

9. **MYTH:** If you do not forgive all offenders, God will not forgive you.

TRUTH: This is a deception of Satan and actually a very foolish concept, for we are commanded to forgive as God forgives and love as God loves. God Himself does not forgive the sin all offenders. He only forgives the sins of those enemies who desire to be His friends because they are drawn in repentance, acknowledging sin, and begging for removal of sin. (Romans 8:2, Matthew 18:32)

10. **MYTH:** Forgiveness should never be considered a sin.

TRUTH: Disobedience to God's clear command is always a sin. Jesus never says to first forgive an unrepentant brother of his sin but to:

A. First rebuke him

B. Go to him privately not to first forgive, but to first confront/rebuke in love.

C. Treat him "like a heathen" if he remains unrepentant,

If we skip or fail to do any of these, we are unloving and sinning against Jesus' command. Paul also says to put some out of the church, not to forgive! Not out of bitterness, but out of what is most loving for all involved.

(Matt. 18:15-17, Lk. 17:3, Gal. 6:1, Gen. 50:20, Prov. 9:7-9, Psalm 141:5, 1 Cor. 5:9-13, 2 Thess. 3:6, Rom. 16:17, 2 Thess. 3:14, Titus 3:10, 1 Tim. 5 :1

D. Some non-Christians receive rebuke and correction as well or better than Christians, but many in the world care nothing about doing good or being righteous. If they love or deny their sin, not even Jesus can forgive their sin. You cannot remove (forgive) their debt, sorrow, and torment for wrong doing when they have no debt, sorrow or torment.

11. **MYTH:** If you are angry and bitter it means that you are unforgiving.

TRUTH: No, it does not! Being angry and bitter does not mean that you are unforgiving. Being angry and bitter reveals that you are not doing these 5 things:

A. You are not trusting in God's Sovereignty. That is, trusting that God allowed the pain and that He allowed (not caused) your offender to hurt you.

B. You are not trusting God to be vengeful as He promises (Romans 12:19).

C. You are not mourning to God (grief + faith Matthew 5:4, Psalm 126:5-6).

D. You are not being meek (not angry and bitter, yielding all to God in order to find His peace and rest: Matthew 11:29, Hebrews 12:15).

E. You are not PRAYING FOR and LOVING YOUR ENEMY or OFFENDER as Christ commanded.

12. MYTH: Jesus forgave His enemies on the Cross.

TRUTH: Jesus prayed for His enemies not because He was forgiving His enemies of their sin, but because He COULD NOT remove/forgive their unconfessed sin.

- **The one thing Jesus cannot do: He CANNOT SIN. To preempt and ignore His Father or to forgive unrighteously would be sinful.**
- **We have glossed over the truth of the Cross which so powerfully demonstrates the love, the forgiveness, and the UNFORGIVENESS of Jesus Christ!**
- **What is the difference between OFFERING \$10,000,000 or REQUESTING \$10,000,000?**
- **THE CROSS PROVIDES A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN OFFER AND A REQUEST.**
- **Jesus OFFERED forgiveness of sin, worth more than \$10,000,000, to one thief. He reconciled with him, justified him, saved him, made a transaction of forgiveness with him, and invited him to Paradise. But Jesus did not REQUEST (pray for) forgiveness for the thief.**
- **Jesus REQUESTED Forgiveness for the Soldiers, praying on their behalf. But Jesus DID NOT OFFER forgiveness to them; He did not speak to them. He made no transaction with them. He did not reconcile with them. He did not justify them. He did not save them and He made no assurances of Paradise to them. He did exactly what He told us to do. He never said to “forgive your (unrepentant) enemy, but to “Love your enemies...and Pray for those who persecute you.”**
- **Jesus did not lie to us when He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." John 6:44
Can the Son invite someone to Heaven without the Father's pre-approval? It is His Father's House, is it not?**
- **If we teach that Jesus could save someone and invite them into His Father's House without the Father first drawing and leading them to repentance, then we are teaching that Jesus is a sinner against His Father's will and contradicting His own teaching.**
- **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life [AND ANY MAN OR SOLDIER THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL PERISH AND SHALL REMAIN UNFORGIVEN AND SHALL NOT OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE]... He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already (NOT FORGIVEN ALREADY), because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

13. MYTH: Because Jesus already atoned/paid for your sin at the cross, that means he has already forgiven (removed/lifted off/sent away) your sin from you. You just have to accept it.

TRUTH: Paying for sin and the removal of sin are two completely different things.

- Suppose you had a friend who had cancer but had no health insurance. You meet a very wealthy man who takes great concern for your friend and pays for all the doctor and medical bills in advance. Does this mean your friend's cancer is removed/sent away/forgiven? No, it has been paid for but if your friend decides to die in hospice care and not go through with surgery, the cancer will remain.
- Your sin remains until you admit that you need forgiveness of sin. The fact that the price of surgery has already been paid does not mean your cancerous sin has already been removed/forgiven. Your sin will not be removed/forgiven until you confess that you need the surgery and you desire that the cancerous sin be removed.
- God loves you. Jesus freely provided a way of escape from God's justice due you and the ravaging effects of the disease of sin. Do you want the surgery? It has already been paid for but Jesus says without faith and repentance, you are condemned already, not forgiven already. John 3:18

14. MYTH: If you love everyone, you must "forgive" everyone (forgive/remove the sin and debt of every offender.)

TRUTH: Just as with God:

- A. Love holds people accountable
- B. Forgiveness is THE END of accountability

15. MYTH: You must "remove/forgive" everyone because you do not know what is in their hearts.

TRUTH: 1. True remorse and repentance are easy to see and nearly impossible to hide. 2. Forgiving is not removing or sending away people, but sending away their burdens of sin, debt, remorse, and sorrow they feel for their offense, just as your repentance to God should be.

16. MYTH: Paul teaches to forgive the same way Jesus teaches to forgive.

TRUTH: The word Paul uses (Charizomai: graciously overlook) for "forgive" and the word Jesus most often uses for "forgive" (Aphiemi: lift off or remove) have two different meanings and CANNOT be interchanged.

17. MYTH: The Lord's Prayer: If we do not forgive all those who trespass against us, God will not forgive us!

TRUTH: God forgives only the sin of those trespassers who admit they are in debt and beg for release of their debt, just as He commands us to do. The world is full of billions of trespassers whose sins God does not forgive.

18. MYTH: God commands us to not be hateful or not hold a grudge by forgiving our offenders.

TRUTH: God commands us to not be hateful or not hold a grudge not by forgiving, but by REBUKING and LOVING our offender, and trusting God. (Leviticus 19:17-19)

19. MYTH: Forgiveness means we should be at peace and move on!

TRUTH: Never. Forgiveness only means to remove or send away the guilt and sorrow of sin from the offender who is begging and to be reconciled with them.

20. MYTH: Forgiveness means we should not desire vengeance.

TRUTH: We should believe in God's promise of justice and vengeance, not our own. We should also pray that God's mercy and forgiveness would come to those enemies to whom He has promised His vengeance.

To not desire God's justice on the rapist, murderers, pedophiles, torturers, etc., is to allow evil to continue to harm innocent people. Love wants what is best. Forgiveness/removal of accountability* is often not best for us or for others. (Romans 12:19)

21. MYTH: You will never be free from anger unless you forgive your offender.

TRUTH: We are freed from anger when we:

- a. Mourn to God**
- b. Trust God is in control (it is He who allowed my offender to hurt me)**
- c. Understand and live in meekness**
- d. Love our offender**
- e. Pray for our offender**
- f. Do good and bless our offender**

IF YOU ARE DOING THESE THINGS, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE BITTER? And you haven't even gotten to forgiveness yet!

Biblically, forgiveness never has anything to do with removing anger and bitterness from your heart. That is accomplished through love and

meekness. Removal (forgiveness) is only for the sin of the offender when they want their sin removed (forgiven).

22. MYTH: We should always forgive our children as the Prodigal son was forgiven by his father.

TRUTH: If we knew the Jewish culture and laws of teshuva, we would clearly understand that Jesus was teaching the same thing He taught in Matthew 18:32; that the prodigal son was forgiven for one reason: he came home repentant, doing teshuva.

Had the prodigal son come home arrogant, successful, with prostitutes and drug addicts in his entourage, his father would have never allowed him to set foot on his property. (There are many times that we should charizomai (overlook) the smaller, non-egregious offenses of our children just as God does for us, but this was not one of them!)

23. MYTH: Joseph forgave his brothers.

TRUTH: Because he loved his brothers deeply, Joseph was harsh on his brothers out of a desire to bring them to teshuva (repentance).

He put them in prison, accused them of being spies, bound Simon before their eyes, sent for Benjamin only and not his father, accused them of thievery, and waited many years before he (by God) actually brought them to acknowledgement of guilt. He finally forgave their sin when he saw in them a heart of remorse and a desire to be free from their guilt.

24. MYTH: Jesus forgave the paralytic before he repented

TRUTH: Scripture makes it abundantly clear that that is not the case. It is very obvious that Jesus discerned in the paralytic a very burdened and repentant heart, not someone who wanted to be healed so he could go sin some more. (Matthew 9:2) Conversely, discerning the hearts of the Pharisees, Jesus did not offer them forgiveness. (Mark 2:8)

25. MYTH: Stephen forgave those who stoned him

TRUTH: Stephen prayed for mercy on those stoning him because he knew and believed in God's vengeance and that the charges of God, not forgiveness, were coming on his persecutors. Therefore, he begged God to have mercy on them.

For forgiveness to take place, there must be an interaction and a transaction between offended and offender. Like Jesus on the cross, Stephen did not even

He simply did what Jesus told all of us to do: "Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Matthew 5:4

26. **MYTH:** Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery before she repented
TRUTH: The only reason that a person can possibly believe this is if they are unaware of Jesus' teachings of teshuva.

Jesus could not condemn her because, in context, the law required witnesses. This is exactly why he asked the two questions: "Where are thine accusers? Does no one condemn thee?" He never implies that he forgives her sin nor does he ever offer forgiveness or Paradise to anyone who is unrepentant.

Jesus showed love by protecting her from Pharisaical hypocrisy and death. Then Jesus asked her to make a choice: to go and sin no more. Being a Jew, she knew exactly what that meant. It meant to demonstrate by teshuva (Acknowledgement, Remorse, Repentance, Restitution, and Confession) that she wanted forgiveness.

Jesus, most likely, discerned in her a wavering heart of what she truly wanted...to go back and continue her (possible) profession as the most powerful and wealthy prostitute to the Pharisees, or showing, by "doing teshuva," (turning away from sin and turning to God) that she desired to be cleansed and forgiven of her sin.

*Forgiveness, defined as removal of guilt and accountability for a sin, does not necessarily negate the responsibility for the consequences of the sin.