

The Best Time To Forgive Someone Is Immediately

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a clear conscience before God, highlighting the need to forgive others immediately to avoid hindrances in prayer and blessings. It discusses the significance of understanding and living in the truth to experience freedom and answers to prayer in a relationship with God. The speaker encourages believers to trust in God's sovereignty, remain secure in His love, and prioritize a strong vertical relationship with God to foster harmonious horizontal relationships with others.

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Scripture: 1 John 3:22, 1 John 3:21, Matthew 5:22, John 8:32, Romans 8:28, Proverbs 21:1, 1 John 4:18, Mark 11:25, Matthew 22:37

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Clear Conscience"

Description

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Transcript

Because this verse that we read, I'd like to look at it before we go further. In 1 John 3, this is our memory verse, whatever we ask, verse 1 John 3, 22, whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. But it also says in verse 21, if our heart does not condemn us, then we have confidence before God.

So, when we come before God, it's very important to make sure that our heart is not condemning us, convicting us about something not said right. Do you remember Jesus once said that if you're angry with a brother, it's Matthew 5, 22-24, and then you come and pray to God, the Lord says, leave your offering there, don't go further in your prayer, stop. Go back to your brother, settle that matter with him, then come and give your offering to God.

So, if a person doesn't listen to that, and says, well, I'm just going to give an offering, don't be surprised if he doesn't get an answer. Because his heart does not have confidence before God, there's something he's not listening to. So, that's why I've been stressing a lot these days about always forgiving others immediately.

The best time to forgive somebody is immediately, because the longer you wait, there'll be more problems. It's like I was saying, the best time to remove a thorn from your foot is immediately. And if you wait, it gets infected.

The best time to, you know, fix an injury in your hand is immediately. You delay, it gets infected. The best time to forgive somebody is immediately.

As soon as someone has hurt you, or you heard that someone did something against you or said something against you, even if you don't see where he is or she is, say, Lord, I forgive that person. I have followed that principle for ever since I got light on it, and it's made a lot of difference in my life. Because in the early days, normally, I would say, why doesn't God answer that prayer? I'd often be gloomy and discouraged.

Because I wasn't removing these thorns from my feet, and over a period of time, you accumulate many thorns. And you wonder why your feet's getting infected. So that's a little recommendation I give to you.

God always answers prayer. And sometimes, your waiting period can be a long, long time, because you're not ready to receive that answer to prayer. Because there are things you've not settled in your own life.

See, God is not a slot machine where you put in a prayer and you get an answer. It's not like that. God answers our prayers in a relationship.

It's not you send a request, you get an answer. It's not like that. It's not at all.

It's a relationship. And if that relationship with your Heavenly Father is broken by sin, or sometimes by unbelief, you don't live in a trusting relationship, then answers to prayer either don't come, or you never get what God wants you to have. I'm absolutely convinced that many, many believers do not receive all that God wants them to have.

I know from my own experience, for many, many years, I never received all that God wanted me to have. First because I was in churches where I never heard the truth, the full truth, I mean. The Bible says, and Jesus said in John 8, 32, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

So I've learned from that. I remember in my early days wondering, which church has got the truth? Because every church was holding the Bible and saying, we've got the truth. We believe the Bible is the Word of God.

There are many, many cults today that don't honor Christ, they don't even believe that Jesus Christ is God, who say we believe in the Bible. And so, what the way the Lord cleared it up for me was from John 8, 32, if the church is preaching the truth, and you understood it correctly, it will set you free. If what you're hearing is not setting you free, that's not the truth.

Or you got it wrongly, you haven't understood it properly. If something you hear brings you into condemnation, either the guy who preached it didn't know the truth, or you received it in a wrong way,

misunderstood it, that's why you're in bondage. I don't believe that God wants His children to be in bondage for a single moment to anything, to sin or self-condemnation or discouragement or anything.

It's never the will of God. And if you find yourself ever, ever, ever in such a situation, you say, Lord, show me why. What is the truth here that I haven't understood, which keeps me in bondage? Because you said you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.

I want to know the truth that will set me free. I've decided in my life that, not right from the beginning, because unfortunately, I never had a spiritual father who taught me all these things, so I had to sort of discover it over a period of many, many years. But once I discovered it, I said, Lord, I will never be in bondage.

I refuse to be in bondage. I refuse to be in bondage of fear of Satan, that he can harm me. He cannot touch me.

I hope all of you are completely free from the fear that Satan can trouble you here or trouble you there. I've seen believers who've been for years with fear, even preachers and pastors who feel that Satan's troubling me here and Satan's troubling me there. I said, do you believe in a Christ who defeated Satan on the cross? He's alive, but he's paralyzed.

I mean, it's like a snake that's alive but paralyzed. It's not dead. Satan's not destroyed, but his power to harm you is gone.

God's taken away his armor from him. And it's very, very important to understand that we don't live in fear. We don't live in fear of the devil.

We don't live in fear of people who can harm us, because God has said that if you will love me and walk in my purpose for your life, Romans 8, 28, everything will work for your good. There's a condition. Always there's a condition.

Even for initial forgiveness of sins, there's a condition. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's a condition.

If you love God and you want to fulfill his purpose for your life alone, there's a guarantee from God in Romans 8, 28, that every single thing that ever happens to you, that people do to you, or people don't do what they promise to do, will all work for your good. Isn't it amazing that somebody promises to do something for me and he doesn't do it? That also is going to work for my good. I'm undefeatable.

That's a Christian life. That's how Jesus walked on this earth. You know, once when, I'll never forget this, it's been a great help to me for many, many years, when Jesus stood before Pilate and Pilate sort of threatened him saying, don't you know I've got power to crucify you or release you? You're at my mercy right now.

And Jesus stood there like the king. Pilate was a coward. Pilate was a slave there to the opinions of men.

Jesus stood there like a king and told Pilate, you have no power over me. Imagine telling a judge, you have no power over me, except what my father gives you. It's amazing to live like that in your place of work.

You don't have to say that to your boss, but you can have that attitude if you recognize even your boss in your place of work. Don't say it, but remember this. You have no power over me.

Once when religious people took me to a court because I exposed their wrong doctrines. I said this under my breath to the judge sitting in front, you have no power over me, except what my father gives you. I've said that in many situations.

Remember this in your heart. That's why it's a wonderful life. If you love God and call according to His purpose, we have, I think at least 2,000 people in some of our churches who are from non-Christian homes.

Many others are from nominal Christian homes, but many from non-Christian homes where they worship idols and things like that. And these are young people living in those homes, and I say to them, do you know your parents, honor your parents, love them, respect them, always speak kindly to them, good to them, but remember they have no power over you. Once you come under the authority of Jesus Christ, He controls everything.

You know this wonderful verse in Proverbs 21 and verse 1? It's a great verse. I often quote it to many, many people in different situations. If you don't know it, you must remember it.

Proverbs 21, the king's heart is like rivers of water. In the hand of the Lord, he turns it wherever he wishes. You know, there's a difference between rivers and man-made canals.

If you noticed, clearly if you're flying in a plane, you can make out which is a river and which is a man-made canal. A man-made canal is always straight, turns at right angles. It's made by man, because that looks neat.

But God's rivers are not like that. There's no river which is absolutely straight and turns at a right angle. Rivers are always curved, and sometimes it's going east, and all of a sudden a little later it's going west.

Then it's going south, and then it turns around and goes north. That's how rivers are. And the Lord says here that even the king, when He says the king, that means the highest authority in the land, and that includes everybody all the way down to the last beggar in the country.

He can turn the heart of that king in a completely opposite direction to the way it's going right now. It's an amazing thing to look at these promises and say, Lord, I want you to fulfill that in this particular situation. And it's a wonderful thing when we've gone through life and have this experience in numerous situations in our life where we have seen God actually turning a situation of an authority, an authority over us, to completely opposite, and that guy doesn't even know that God is influencing him, because he's influencing him because I'm his child.

It's a wonderful thing when you have a few experiences like that, we realize, we look forward with greater confidence for the future. We never live in fear because we have a Father in heaven who is providing and caring for us if we love God and are called according to His purpose. And one result of that is it makes us more relaxed in our life, and it enables us, believe it or not, to love others more easily.

The reason why sometimes you find it difficult to love others is because you're not secure in God's love for you. I'm absolutely convinced about it. When we are insecure, we feel threatened by people, circumstances, bosses, evil people, and then we react by not being able to love somebody whom we

should love.

It's a wonderful thing to be relaxed in God, like we sing in that song, there is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God, a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. That's where we must always live, and when we live there, trusting God, taking care of us in all our situations, it's easy to love. That's why the first commandment is not, love your neighbor as yourself.

The first commandment is love God, because when you love God and you're called according to His purpose, everything works for your good, then you can love your neighbor as yourself. Remember this. If you can't love your neighbor as yourself, it's because you're not at rest in God's perfect love for you, and you don't love Him supremely.

There's something else on earth, or someone else on earth you love more than God. You're going to have unrest all your life, I can predict it, but come to the place where God is first in everything in your life, and you'll be at rest in Him, and you'll be able to love each other effortlessly, and all those tensions that come up in homes between husband and wife will disappear. There will not be murmuring and grumbling in homes.

It all depends on our love for God. That vertical relationship is what determines everything in our horizontal relationship with people. Remember this, and the reason why the world is in such chaos is because most of them have no vertical relationship, and even most so-called Christians don't live in a fervent vertical relationship with God.

Their prayers are usually a shopping list, like you go to the grocery store with a shopping list, they go to God with a shopping list of prayer, give me this, give me that, give me the other thing, usually material things and healing and things like that. Well, everybody in the world wants those things, but if you want everything to work for your good, the only way is to love God with all your heart, and say, Lord, I want to fulfill your purpose in my life.

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