

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

Prayer before class:

Our father in heaven. We thank you for today. We thank you for the day that has mostly passed, for our African brethren and for those who are joining our class from other places around the Earth. We thank you for the labor that they've been able to do today to help provide for themselves and their families. And we thank you now for the opportunity to be gathered here in this platform and use this environment to learn more about your word.

I thank you, father, for our brother Jason, for his years of faithful service in the kingdom, for his years of service with both he and his wife and in the family that they have. I pray that you'll continue to bless Jason in the work that he does for the Madison church. Be with him today and help him to deliver a message from your word that will help all of us better understand about what godly forgiveness is and what you expect us to do in our walk as Christians and I pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Jason speaking:

This video is as a brief moment in a courtroom here in the United States. Several years ago, there was a young man who many of the folks here at Madison knew very well. They went to university with him, and he moved to Texas. And he was sitting in his apartment one night when an officer mistakenly entered his apartment thinking that she was entering her apartment, and she thought that he was an intruder in her apartment.

And so she took out her gun and shot him and killed him. This young man had a reputation for being an excellent song leader, being very active in church for being a just a salt of the earth kind of fellow. His name was both John, and it may have made global news. I know it was all over the place here and very, very personal to many of our students who went to school with him.

This short clip is of his brother at the trial of the officer who murdered his innocent brother. This is both of those brothers response to that officer.

Botham Jean's brother's comments at the trial of the Police Officer that shot his brother:

Say twice or for the th time, what you've or how much you've taken from us. I think you know that.

But I just I hope you go to God with all, with all the guilt, all the bad things you may have done in the past. Each and every one of us may have done something that we're not supposed to do. If you truly are sorry, I know I can speak for myself. I, I, I forgive you, and I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you.

And I don't think anyone could say it again. I'm speaking for myself. Not even bad for my family. But I love you just like anyone else.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

I'm not going to say I hope you write and die just like my brother did, but I, I, I personally want the best for you. And I wasn't gonna ever say this in front of my family or anyone, but I don't even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you.

Because I know that's what. That's exactly what both of them would want you to do. And the best would be give your life to Christ. To Christ be the best thing that both don't want to do.

Again, I love you as a person.

I don't wish anything bad for you.

I don't know if it is possible, but can I give her a hug, please?

Please?

(End of brother's comments at the trial)

Jason speaking:

It just gets more emotional from there. I shared this to to begin our time together this morning to talk about the idea of forgiveness, which is one of those topics that's sometimes really easy to talk about, but really challenging to live out when it comes to forgiveness. I would say that unexpected forgiveness is incredibly moving on a much smaller scale.

When I went to university here in Alabama, I had to borrow money to pay for it and it took out a loan. Well, once I left school, that's when you begin the process of paying that loan back. I got a phone call one day, and the person on the other side of the phone said, Mr. Jason. Yeah, that's me.

Said, I want to let you know that someone has anonymously paid this loan for you. I thought it was a prank call. I thought they were they were just messing with me because this was a large amount of money that would have taken me years to pay back. And all of a sudden, in one phone call, that debt was paid.

It wasn't paid because I deserved, I deserved it. It wasn't paid because I paid anything towards it. It was because someone else who was completely disconnected from the debt took it upon themselves to forgive that debt on my behalf. And they they made that payment in my name. And so I no longer was under that debt. That is unexpected for Gibson.

I was floored, I sat down, I couldn't wrap my brain around. I still to this day, and just kind of shocked by that act of generosity that someone without any obligation volunteer to pay something that I knowingly took on as a debt. This young man in this courtroom in front of his family, which I cannot imagine how difficult that was, looked into the eyes of the person who took his brother's life and not just said that I want

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

what's best for you and that I forgive you, but asked if he could go and to embrace her publicly.

That is unexpected forgiveness, and that is the love of Christ. This is the best example, the two personal example, and then one of the most moving examples I've ever seen of unexpected forgiveness. That's the way God has designed for this to work. I think a lot of times we we get caught up in the offense or we get caught up in the emotional impact when someone wrongs us.

And so we think in terms of, well, we've got to make things right. You know, that scale gets out of balance. We've got to we've got to do what we can to put that skill back in balance. But when it comes to justice, revenge, mercy, fairness, they're not all the same. We love the idea of justice. And sometimes we get consumed with the pursuit of revenge because we think that brings about justice.

But God implemented this thing called mercy and forgiveness that completely changes the scale altogether. We think that justice is making consequences equal. You hurt me in my arm, so now I have to hurt you in your arm as this the old, old scripture would say I for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That's not the kind of justice that God is enacting with the gospel.

With the gospel, it's just ness with him, right? It's not a matter of me being right at your expense of being wrong. It's a matter of us being right with God. So God's definition of fairness then puts us in accordance with him, not necessarily in accordance with our own will. If you have your your scriptures with you this morning, turn with me to the book of James, or this evening, where it may be for you, James chapter two.

It's a wonderful book, but it's an extremely challenging book in so many ways. And this is one of those moments in James chapter two and verse we read. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For a judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. If I had a scale here or a balance and I had two objects, it would ebb and flow until it rested, and it would let you know which one was heavier than the other. What this passage tells us is that the our idea of justice, our idea of keeping, of the law, is too heavy of a burden for us to bear.

Mercy triumphs over that judgment.

Mercy is a greater a greater blessing to bestow upon someone. When we try to enact our own justice without first being willing to extend mercy, then we're taking on something that is too heavy for us to bear. It's something that is intended exclusively for God. He is to be the judge, not us. From from an eternal standpoint. Mercy ultimately triumphs over judgment.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

The the Pharisees. We see this a lot in the New Testament. They tried really hard to pinpoint certain parts of the old law, and they were unwavering oftentimes in their in their their execution, I guess, of justice in their eyes when oftentimes Jesus would confront them and he would confront them with a moment of mercy and that they couldn't really handle that, you know, from a internally, they just they couldn't make that math work.

And so they had conflict with Christ. If we refuse mercy, we refuse. We cling to this judgment, idea of judgment. Then we will find ourselves in conflict with the gospel and in conflict with Christ. Jesus does this thing a lot of times where he uses what I call Kingdom math. I'll give you an example. Turn to Matthew chapter .

Kingdom math is where Jesus sort of turns earthly logic on its head. He goes the opposite direction with where his audience thinks he's going to go. And Matthew , perhaps, is one of those moments in Matthew chapter will begin. In verse , Jesus has been asked about forgiveness, and he says, I did not say to you seven times, but forgive someone times seven.

Therefore, verse , the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him , talents, and since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment be made.

So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything out of pity for him. The master of that servant released him and forgave him in the dead. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who had owed him a hundred deanery, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, pay what you owe.

So this fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me, and I will repay you. He refused, and he went, and he put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servant saw that he had what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place in verse .

Then his master summoned him and said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, because you pleaded with me, and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

This is a very powerful moment, a very powerful illustration that Jesus uses based off of what we can research. One talent represented about denari. So if , talents were, oh, that's about million denari. So one person owes this amount of million. Deanery. Another servant owes dea. Now denari is not a small debt. One deanery was basically a day's wage.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

So you're talking 300 days worth of labor. That's not insignificant. But if you look at the first servants, what he owed his debt was 300 days worth of wages. 300 days is a lot, but that's doable in time. It's a third of the year that you would be working on working to pay off that debt. 300 years is impossible to pay back.

And his point here was he owed this massive, impossible debt. There's no way he could pay this back in his lifetime. And yet the master forgave the servant. And that servant's response to forgiveness was then to go to someone who owed a fraction of that amount to him, and to demand that debt be paid. I think this is this happens sometimes with us that we we feel so deeply wronged that forgiveness is not even on the table, that mercy is not even something that we consider because we have been so offended or so hurt by someone else's actions or words or intentions.

And yet we forget to stand before the cross, before the empty tomb, and to look at God and to say, you know what, I, I owe you so much more. I understand that what I owe you can never truly be repaid. That was the whole purpose of Christ coming on the cross. So when we look at this instance in Matthew chapter 18, right before this illustration, this whole story was an answer to, well, how many times am I supposed to forgive somebody?

That's the wrong question. Jesus answers with not seven times, but times seven. I don't think he meant that you're supposed to keep track of times of forgiveness and 7. You don't have to forgive him anymore. I don't think that's what he's saying at all. I think he's using those numbers to say, well, complete forgiveness. Forgive them fully.

Also, remember the debt that you owe and that was paid for you not to guilt them into anything, but to remind them, to humble them into realizing that, as Paul would say, we have a ministry of reconciliation, and forgiveness is forgiveness is a one way street. I choose to forgive you if you do something to offend me. I'm not in control of whether or not you forgive me.

Reconciliation is a two way street. It requires both of us to forgive each other, to reconcile fully. So I'm not always in control of reconciliation. My aim is reconciliation. But what I'm in control of is forgiveness. And if I refuse to forgive, then there's no chance of reconciliation. So if I choose not to forgive someone, then I'm basically saying, Paul, I refuse the ministry of reconciliation.

That's a part of our purpose as Christians. And if you in Romans five, Paul says that we are reconciled to the father through the son, through the blood of Christ, and so reconciliation is found in Christ. So if if reconciliation is really like the the essence or the if it's the foundation of our relationship with God, why in the world would it not also be the foundation of our relationship with one another?

It has to be. It doesn't have to be. It can't be an afterthought. It has to be the forethought. The first thought that we have when someone offends us or hurts us, our desire, then just as as both brother in that courtroom, I just cannot imagine the the tension in that room. It sounded

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

like his thoughts were not shared across all of his family members, and I get that their son's life ended early, recklessly, for no reason, because he was sitting in his own apartment, minding his own business, that there's no greater injustice than an innocent life being taken.

And that's a that's what that was. And yet, his response, when he could have harbored anger and malice in his heart, he didn't have any right to forgive her. The the carnal, the earthly mind says, absolutely not. We're going to we're going to hold her to the fullest extent of the law. We're going to give her the death penalty because an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.

And yet in that moment when all of the eyes of the world were on him, that video has been viewed millions of times since then. He points her to Jesus. He said, I want you to know Christ, and I know that Christ has the capacity to forgive you. So why in the world what I hold on to something that Christ has forgiven you of?

If Christ can forgive you of years worth of labor, and the price of that, I can forgive you the price of my brother's life. That's what my brother would have wanted. What an amazing encouragement. Example of forgiveness. So the question again here is not how many times do I have to forgive? That's the wrong question. The better question is how much freedom do I want?

See, I think when when we when we're forgiven, it's not to then go and imprison other people. Just like that servant. He was forgiven. So then he went and was trying to threaten the other, the other servant who owed him. That's not the purpose of forgiveness. We are forgiven to then go and forgive, because through forgiveness we have freedom, or freedom in Christ is exclusively because of the forgiveness that comes with having our sins washed away by him, not by us, not of our own doing.

And so that is something that is extremely challenging for us to live out on a regular basis. I like to think I like visual things. Every now and then my wife and I, we have four young children, so there's always chaos going on in our house. And every now and then a glass or something, we'll we'll get knocked off the table and it'll, it'll shatter.

Well, if you went to pick up that glass and you held in your hand a pile of broken glass, that's a little bit like forgiveness. Let me give you what I mean by this. One of my younger sons, whenever he gets offended by one of his siblings, they'll come up and maybe they'll say, sorry I hit you.

His first response is usually with his teeth clenched, apology not accepted. You know, he thinks that that by not forgiving them, by not accepting their apology, that now he's got something over on them, that he is somehow refusing to do this and that's hurting them. But really, it's kind of like he's holding on to that handful of broken glass.

If you squeeze tighter and tighter, holding on to broken glass, the only person you heard is yourself. When we withhold forgiveness from someone else, the only person were really hurting. Excuse me. Is is ourselves. So

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

when my son says apology not accepting, he thinks he's hurting the other person. But the other person has done everything they can to reconcile.

So their conscience is now clean. They actually have the freedom that God promises. But the person who was hurt, who now holds on to that hurt, well, they're the ones that are now imprisoned voluntarily. They have chosen their own prison, that the tighter you squeeze that broken glass, well, the more it hurts yourself. Well, you say, well, you know, there are sometimes some offenses that you just can't wipe the slate clean.

Like in the instance of both of them. His life was taken. You can't bring him back. We can't undo the circumstance that was brought about by the sin there. Well, when it comes to forgiveness, what we quickly realize is that hurt can't be wiped away. It has to be released. And that's why I like that analogy of the broken glass.

You can't just wipe it away. You have to let go. You have to release that and to give it quite literally to God, to to bear. My yoke is easy. My burden is light. He has invited us to release those things to him because it's again, mercy triumphs over judgment. Remember? Remember the scales. Judgment is just too much of a burden for us to carry.

There's not a there's not a legal system or a judicial system on the planet that is perfect. They're always going to fall short because they're man made. The only thing that is perfect in its righteousness and in its judgment is God. And so when we when we commit to our perspective only and that what we think is right or wrong is the only right or wrong, then we're basically saying, God, you're not capable of seeing the situation for what it is.

But God says, no, you're not capable of seeing people's hearts. And the whole purpose of forgiveness is to bring about repentance and to bring about reconciliation, to reconcile those relationships together. It's not a matter of us being right at the expense of someone else being wrong. It's the pursuit of all of us being right with God. Turn with me to Luke chapter , Luke , and we'll read verses three and four from Luke .

It says, pay attention to yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times, saying, I repent, then you must forgive him. Verse , chapter , verse five. The apostle said to the Lord, increase our faith. And the Lord said, if you had faith like the grain of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry, mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it it would obey you.

You see, their response to Jesus telling them to forgive was increase our faith. It takes faith to forgive, and it takes faith in God and in Christ, not in people. And that's that's where we mess up, is that we miss a line. We think it's all directed at the person. But our response to this life, once we become a child of God, is always Godward, never earthly.

It's never carnal. It's never to the person. It's to God. Forgiveness. It's not about being able to put all of those pieces of broken glass back

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

together just the way they were. We can't we can't undo the past, but we can move forward in a way that glorifies him sometimes forgiveness again, it doesn't force those pieces back together.

It simply allows us to move forward so that God can then begin putting those pieces back together. If you've ever seen a mosaic or even stained glass, they take bits and pieces, mosaics take bits and pieces of of pottery and of glass, and they make something new. It's a piece that was once a part of another bottle, but that's been shattered.

You can't put it back together. It won't. It won't keep the liquid the way it once did. But you can now take those pieces and you can make something else just as beautiful, just as helpful. And so that's the same way with forgiveness. When we keep trying to to go back to the past and to make things the way they were, it's just a fruitless endeavor.

It won't work. We're not meant to live backwards. We live forwards. And so God gives us forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation to equip us. Then not to say it never happened and not to just dismiss the offense, but to say that what has happened will no longer have control of me moving forward. I will forgive the people whom I need to forgive, and I will do my best to reconcile on my end of it, so that then I can move forward with freedom, without this burden, without this, this heavy bitterness and anger and malice in my heart.

Those things way, as those things separate us from God, we can't fully move forward. In a way, we're missing opportunities in front of us because we're still harboring all that hatred and anger for the past and for those past relationships. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about this, and it's a brief moment here that I think sometimes maybe we skip over.

So turn with me to Matthew chapter five and Matthew chapter five. We'll look in verse . Again, this is almost like a passing statement here in this section he's talking about anger. So we'll start in verse . Just to begin the thought. He says, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder.

Whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. Whoever says you fool will be liable to hell a fire. So if you are offering. If this is where I want to focus, verse , if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first.

Be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge. Judge to the guard, and you'll be in prison. What he's saying here in verse, specifically verses and verses , and , if you are coming to offer your gift, you're coming to worship and you realize, wait a minute, I think so-and-so has has something they're frustrated with me about.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

They have. The way it's saying we have here is they have beef with me. They are disgruntled. They're angry at me for something. Before I step into that room to offer, step up to the altar to offer my sacrifice, I need to leave the sacrifice right there before I worship God. I need to go and I need to be reconciled with this person.

Now a couple of things jump out to me. One, Jesus clearly prioritizes reconciliation over worship, and in our neck of the woods, worship is very important. It is one of the most central aspects to the identity of the church. Here. We believe deeply, and we guard worship and our worship gatherings in a big way. But Jesus says, before you can even worship, you have to reconcile.

The second thing that jumps out to me here is the fact that it's not that you have an issue with that other person, but is that, you know they have an issue with you. So your job then is to initiate reconciliation. You're the person who starts the reconciliation process. If you know that they have an issue with you, you go to them and you initiate that conversation to make things right.

Again, it's not about me being right, them being wrong. It's about us being right with God. And that's at the heart of what Jesus is saying here. The gospel reconciles us to him. It's not a matter of God being right in us, being wrong, that we know that's the case. God is greater and more infinite than us.

It's about us being made right with him through Christ. So if you go to a symbol on a Sunday morning and you know, someone who usually sits on the other side of the room is angry at you, but you've been avoiding that conversation and they've been avoiding that conversation. God seems to be telling us here that we can't fully worship if we don't fully reconcile.

If if, as Paul says, we have a ministry of reconciliation, if Christians are to be the ones that can reconcile, help reconcile the world to God, if we're not willing to reconcile with each other, how in the world can we set an example for the rest of the world? How in the world can we say that this life is better when we're still holding on to the same bitterness, the same anger or the same malice, the same hurt?

If we're not willing to let go of those things, then how can we say our life is any different than those living around us? This city set upon a hill, the salt and the light, the distinctive nature of God's people is how we love one another. And if we love each other, then we're willing to forgive. We're willing to reach out to the other person and to initiate that reconciliation.

I think Jesus showed this in his response to Peter. Look in Matthew , go to the end of the book of Matthew, and we have a moment here that I think Peter would agree is one of his lowest points, definitely one of the lowest spots in his life. Let's look here in Matthew chapter and verse .

Now, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a servant girl came up to him and said, you also were with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

it before them all, saying, I do not know what you mean. And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

And again he denied it with an oath. I didn't even know the man. After a little while, the bystanders came up and said to Peter, certainly you, to you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you. Then he began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear I do not know the man. Immediately the rooster crowed.

But Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times. And he went out, and he wept bitterly. I don't know if you've ever been in a situation where you needed a friend to stand up for you, and instead of standing up for you. They disowned you when they reacted the way that Peter did.

I've been in a couple of those situations, and there is not a lonelier feeling on the planet than to think that someone has your back and in the in the moment when you really need it, they're not there. Well, that was Peter. That's got to be the lowest point of his life. Three times he denied Jesus. And then, just as Jesus predicted, the rooster crows and that conviction sets in.

He locks eyes with Jesus and and the full weight of what he's done comes crashing down upon him. Now, to Peter's credit, he did not respond the way Judas did. Judas also betrayed Jesus, and that guilt and that shame was too much for him to bear. And so he took his own life. But Peter responds, and if we look in the book of John, the Gospel of John, chapter , just just a little while later, we're talking, days and weeks later, Jesus is going to come back from the grave.

We know that looking in hindsight, Peter didn't know that at the moment. Peter had to endure seeing Jesus on the cross, watching him be taken and be buried, and living through those three really long days of thinking that he contributed to the death of their king. So we know eventually Jesus is resurrected. He does come back and does appear to them.

So in John chapter , this is one of those appearances to the disciples in verse it says, when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? And he said to him, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said to him, yes, yes, Lord, you know I love you. He said, tin my sheep. He said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was greed, because he said to him a third time, do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.

Jesus said to him, feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but you were old. When you were old, you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go. This is said to show by what kind of death you was going to glorify God.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

After saying this, he said to him, follow me. Jesus could have very easily and justifiably cast Peter off like no man. When I needed you the most. You denied me over and over again three times, just like I told you and you still did it. And yet, when Jesus comes back and he's trying to give clarity to these disciples about what's actually taking place.

They've had all these puzzle pieces and they're still trying to fit them together like this. It's not the script that they had written for themselves, but what I want you to understand is that Jesus's response to Peter is the same response that we should have with forgiveness. It shows that we are forgiven, and when we're forgiven, we're useful.

Peter has a purpose here. Jesus is saying, do you love me? Well, yeah, I love you. Feed my sheep. You still have a purpose. Go and fulfill that purpose. You are free. You are forgiven to be free. And you are free. Then to forgive others. Your purpose is to glorify me, to grow my kingdom. Peter could walk around with that shame.

With that guilt. I can't imagine a heavier weight than knowing that you personally denied Jesus in the moment when he's there in the flesh. And yet Jesus says, I'm not intending for you to walk around feeling I'm not keeping. Hey, Peter, remember that time you denied me? That's not his response. He's not trying to bring it back up over and over again.

You know, we do that sometimes, right, in our marriages or do that sometimes in our friendships and relationships where where we just we keep bringing up the past. Yeah. But remember, remember that time. Oh, yeah. You do this. You do this all the time. That's not helpful. That doesn't allow us to move forward with freedom, with liberty that we find in Christ.

And it brings that back up for that other person. It disturbs or excuse me. It distracts from them, understanding that they now have been forgiven. And so now they are useful with that forgiveness I think of in the book of film, when Paul writes to Philemon and says, you know, I'm going to return to you. He was your slave, but he he's been useful to me.

And also now he's a brother in Christ. So he's useful to you as well. Don't receive him as a servant. Receive him as a brother in Christ. That should change how you see people. He's useful to you. So your response, even though you may be legally justified for retribution in Christ, that's not the same justification. We can't hold against ourselves what God does not hold against us.

I think sometimes the hardest person in the world to forgive us ourselves because we know every thought we've ever had. We know our motives. We know our actions as well, and it's hard to let go of the past. We as a father, there are so many times where I have an interaction with my kids. I'm like, man, that was that was a wrong way to handle that and I can let that.

We had a rough morning this morning just getting my, my, my son to school, my youngest son going to elementary school. It was a rough go. And it's hard for me to shake those interactions when I know that I have

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

not said or done the things that I know I should in those moments, but I don't think I'm intended to walk around with that shame and guilt.

Guilt says what I did was wrong. Shame says I am wrong. Well, I don't want my kids growing up feeling shameful their whole life. That's that's not freedom in Christ. So I have to be willing to forgive myself. Because if God can forgive me, why in the world would I feel like I'm justified holding a grudge if God doesn't hold a grudge?

You see how that doesn't make sense? We can't hold against ourselves what God does not hold against us. And ultimately, forgiveness is giving others or even yourself what God has given you. Just going back to the the story that Jesus told. It's not a matter. You owed me , years worth of labor, and you can't forgive that guy just days.

It's giving him what I gave you. I gave you forgiveness. So don't go then and bind earthly things on other people. Go and lose God. Right? That the gospel. It allows us to let go of those things that we think we might be justified. But our thinking is earthly and it's not spiritual. There's this war of the earthly and spiritual, carnal and spirit going on inside of us.

And and that's something that we have to choose every day to find that clarity in Christ through His Spirit. And ultimately, I want to leave you with just a couple of thoughts. One is we're not forgiven because we deserve forgiveness. I want to be very clear on that. God doesn't forgive us because we deserve it. We're forgiven because Jesus deserves forgiveness, because he was perfect.

He was the fulfillment of the law, the fulfillment of God's plan. He is the fullness of time. He is that Sabbath rest that God tried to show the Israelites right. Jesus is that eternal rest for us. And because we are in Christ now, we have access to that forgiveness that Jesus deserves and it is given to us. I did not deserve forgiveness of the loan that I owed from college, but I was given forgiveness from that loan again, not because I deserved it, not because I was able to pay it, but because someone else was able and willing to pay it on my behalf.

And so we can't miss that. We cannot allow that to be something that distracts us from then giving that freedom. We're forgiven because Jesus deserves us. So if we're forgiven, not because we deserve it, but because Jesus deserves it, then we forgive other people, not because they deserve it, but again, because Jesus deserves it. If we know that we've been forgiven not on our own accord, but because of Christ, then that enables us and empowers us to forgive others not on our own accord, but because of the power of Christ, because the power of the gospel.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

So again, the question is not how much do I need to forgive? The question then becomes is the how much forgiveness do I want in my life? How much freedom do I want? The amount of forgiveness we're willing to give in our life is directly tied to the amount of freedom that we want to have in our life.

And in Galatians five verse one, Paul says, it perfectly says, for freedom Christ set us free. My encouragement to you today is try to work on that. That initial response not to be bitterness, not to be frustration and anger. I think it's okay to be disappointed. Was talking with my sons the other night. I'm okay with you being disappointed that things don't work out the way you want them to, and I'm okay with you being scared sometimes too, because that's a real emotion that we feel.

Sometimes it's fearful, but we can never let fear. We can never let frustration or our own bitterness prevent us from doing what is right in Christ. And that is something that is a learned behavior. There's a new creation, a new life now that we are living. Right. And so that means that we think differently than we used to.

It means we don't see our lens. I'm wearing glasses right now. And it, it it changes how I see the landscape. When I take these off. Everything's a little blurry when I put them on. There's precise clarity. The gospel gives us precise clarity, and it has really nothing to do with us. It has everything to do with Christ his death, his burial, his resurrection, and his appearance.

As Paul lays out in First Corinthians , without the appearance of Christ, then there's no way to to validate the resurrection without a new life, a new way of living in our life, without us now defaulting to forgiveness rather than bitterness, then there's really no way to validate our death and our burial, right? And our resurrection. So if we have been buried in a death like he is, surely we will be raised with the resurrection like his.

As Paul lays out very clearly in Romans chapter six. So that's my my final encouragement, Barry. I think at this point I'll hand it over to you and we can go through some questions if you'd like, if you would. Jason, I did text some to you, do a little review there. And while Jason is taking a look at those questions, as some of you have have submitted, I want to make a couple of other points about forgiveness some of you may be living in, or have who grew up in a situation where you were being offended all the time.

Perhaps there was a parent, a mother, or a father. Maybe they completely abandoned you, or maybe you lived with them, but they were very, very hard or rough on you. As I'm well aware in the African environment, quite often.

Excuse me? When a child becomes an orphan, they're taken in by a family member or someone else. And sometimes and if you experience this yourself, then you know what I'm talking about. Sometimes that child is then not treated like the rest of the children are treated. And it's very easy to become bitter, it's easy to feel like this is unfair, etc.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

etc.,etc. but what I want to say to you is this the environment that I was raised in was one where there was there was constant offense by a parent.

That parent was was regularly offending and hurting, and it was wrong. And that parent was not a Christian and did not I know, understand what was going on. But I'm saying those things to say this. The other parent taught my siblings and I that we must forgive even before that person asks for forgiveness, or even if that person never asks for forgiveness.

And the value in that is that we were taught young. I'm not going to say we did that all the time, but we were taught young that it is in forgiving another person that you find peace. And as Jason just said a few moments ago, how much freedom do you want to have in life from things that cause you pain or cause you challenges?

Your amount of freedom is going to be limited by how much you forgive. If you're unwilling to forgive, if you hold on to things are you seek retribution against that person. You are holding on to something that is going to hurt you, not them. So the freedom we receive, the peace we receive by forgiving people, even if they never ask for it.

And before they ever asked for it, gives us release from the imprisonment of the things that happen when we are offended and don't forgive. I hope you'll think about that some, along with all of the points that Jason has made today. And before I turn control of the meeting back over to him to respond to some of your questions, let me remind you that Jason's lesson will be posted on the Uganda Christian Bible College website.

We are a little bit behind on that. We'll be getting them done in the next few days. The last or classes, including Jason's, will be posted soon on that website, and I will put that link like I always do in the zoom WhatsApp group, so that all of you will see it there, and all you have to do is click on it to access it so that you are aware.

There will be a video of the class from today. There will also be an audio of the class from today, and there will be the notes from Jason's teaching that he he'll provide to me, and those things will be there. So you can download the video, you can download the audio, and you can download the notes to make those things available for your further study.

So, Jason, if you're ready, go ahead, brother, and respond to these classes or to these questions. Excuse me. Okay. Yeah. Let me pull it back up real quick. My screen stop. Tommy, one of the questions here is that brother Jason, it seems forgiving is very hard. It absolutely can be, because forgiveness it despite the hurt that an offense causes, despite the circumstance.

If we go back to that, that case where the young man was sitting in his apartment, his life was taken not because he did anything wrong, but because of a mistake, then that doesn't really make sense in our minds and in our hearts. That's not it's not right. It is brokenness. And since the fall in the garden in Genesis chapter three, we have been living in this broken world, and God's efforts to reconcile us to him through Jesus

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

are the only way that we can have a path forward that leads to any kind of freedom.

So it is it is a difficult thing, but it is. Even though it's difficult, it is a worthy endeavor. Jesus never said it would be easy as far as how to follow him. He said, there's two, two different paths that are available to us. One is a wide, broad way and the gate is large, and there are a lot of people who are going to go that way, but it leads to destruction because that path requires no difficult conversation.

That path doesn't require you to do hard things. It requires you to just go with the flow and to blend in with the world around you. But the way that the path that leads to eternal life that leads to him is a narrow, oftentimes difficult path. But our difficulty is here, and our reward is eternal. If you want your reward here, then your eternal will be difficult.

And so that that's sort of the options that were given. Another question here was, let's see, how do we deal with someone who is not admitting that he or she has wronged you? And then a follow up, I believe, to that is also, was, you know, if must we have the same relationship with the person after the offense?

Scripture tells us as much as is within us. Get along with everybody else as best we can. But I think there are definitely there are moments when there's just a limit to what we can control. Perfect example would be Judas. I believe Judas would have had forgiveness for betraying Jesus in the garden. I think if he had, if he had chosen a different path than I think Jesus would have offered him the same forgiveness that Peter was offered.

But Judas chose to take his own life. People will make choices on their own volition, on their own accord that we are not in control of much in the same way that God offers us forgiveness, he offers us a better way. But many times we don't choose that way. He doesn't force us to. He doesn't force his love upon us.

He doesn't force the gospel upon us. He offers it. And so it is our choice. So oftentimes people, when you offer forgiveness and in certain situations, my encouragement would be even if you don't feel like you were completely in the wrong, finding a way to communicate humility to the other person oftentimes can lead to reconciliation. And if we're not so adamant of making sure that we're right and they're wrong and being really clear on that, like if we're holding on to that dynamic, then maybe we're not being as humble as we need to be.

Forgiveness requires a tremendous amount of humility, both the person being offered forgiveness and the person being forgiven. So it's it is a moment of humility. So my encouragement to you, if the other person refuses to admit that what they're doing is wrong or hurtful or harmful, then in the most humble way, you know how then to continue to to simply state where you are that I forgive you?

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

I was offended by what you did, but I have forgiven you of that and as best as you can. You move forward when they are willing and ready. Then perhaps reconciliation can take place. But that's why I think it's important to understand that forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Reconciliation doesn't take place without forgiveness. But forgiveness can be one way.

Unfortunately, there are times when someone may pass away before the opportunity for reconciliation takes place, and if you still have anger and bitterness towards them, you can eventually come to forgiveness of them. But the opportunity for reconciliation is not there because they're no longer there. So that's why it's important for us to run to forgiveness as quickly as we can, and to try to embrace that, to move forward.

Jason. So you go on. Yeah. Let's you and I have a bit of a dialog about this, because I know there are those that are interested. And what I want to do is just, is just reset the situation of that question. I know that what is being asked is this, okay, so a person has come to me, they've asked me to forgive them.

I have forgiven them. But now what is expected of me? Must I immediately return to the relationship we had previous at the same level of trust, at the same level of involvement, etc. etc. I know that is the underlying question behind what is done. So let's you and I dialog about that a moment if we can. In regard to what does God expect a Christian to do?

We've already stated he expects us to forgive. What is your what is your response in regard to okay, Jason, now what must I do after I've forgiven? It's a really important question and just being honest. Sometimes it looks different depending on the person of the case. When you are raising your children, when they had a pattern of behavior where they broke your trust by disobeying your rules, did they immediately get all of their rights and privileges back the moment they said, I'm sorry?

No. In your house? No, no. Sometimes. Sometimes in our house. But if there's a pattern of behavior there, then it's harder to trust that there's true repentance. Right? And so sometimes that trust takes a lot longer to come because trust is built over time, but it can be destroyed instantly. And so forgiveness I think sometimes is the easy part.

We've got a saying around here, forgive and forget. Well, sometimes forgiveness is the easy part, but forgetting is really, really hard. So how do we balance that with first Corinthians that tells us that love keeps no record of wrong. Well, I think a good place to begin is to what extent do we want God to keep a record of our wrongs?

Jesus said 70 times seven. So if if he was being literal, then we're talking about 490. That's a lot of times. I don't think he was literal. I think he was trying to communicate the idea that your default setting is forgiveness, because our default setting and our need from God is forgiveness, so be willing to do so.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

I do think that it's healthy to set some parameters sometimes. I don't think that that allowing people to abuse you, allowing people to to repeatedly exercise the same thing without any sign of repentance is is the right way to do it all the time. And so having people in your life that are older and wiser, Barry is one of those folks for me, where I will go and say, okay, this is the situation and this has happened a lot.

It's getting harder and harder to forgive because it just seems like they don't want to really change. There is a moment where I reflect on how often do I have a pattern of sin against God, and yet still want him to forgive me? So I think forgiveness still has to be the destination. I do think sometimes we can put some parameters, we can put some.

I don't think that the relationship can go right back to where it was immediately. That's the hope of reconciliation. But even reconciliation doesn't doesn't act like it never happened. Reconciliation allows the two people in the situation to look at each other as whole again and to move forward. Does that make sense? And maybe a better way to kind of explain what I'm saying here.

So feel free to to refine that if you if you think but that's, that's the goal is to move forward and to not be held to be bound by the offense in the past. Right. It's to be able to move forward with freedom in the relationship, you know. And what I think about to Jason is occasionally a person will try to manipulate another person.

As an example, please forgive me. Okay. I've forgiven you. And then that person wants exactly the same relationship they had before. Only God is able to do that, because only God can see into the heart of the person that asked for forgiveness, right? But we as human beings, because we can't see into other people's hearts. I think it's very fair and realistic for us as humans to then require a proving of that penitence through behavior going forward, because there's no reason for us to be harmed.

Again, without wisdom, we're supposed to be as wise as what and as crafty as what? You know, we have to be willing to use the wisdom God has given us in relationship rebuilding so that trust can be built again. But that doesn't mean forgiveness was not genuine, right?

Yeah, exactly. Are there other questions there, David? Excuse me, I see I keep think looking at David's picture, I probably should have said. Are there other questions there you want to address. Let's see here.

I think we may have covered that. If if somebody is always hurting you deliberately, you know, it's I think that's kind of what we maybe covered there. If you think we need to go a little deeper that that's fine by me. One question was Jesus's response was more of a mindset than just a number times seven. Yeah, I think it's I think it's a heart condition.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

You know, if that's if I were to really describe it, it's a condition of the heart. Our heart is not set towards revenge. Revenge. Avenging the wrong is God's role because he will give the exact right punishment for the exact right heart. Our laws are only almost exclusively based off of the actions of people. We know that each of us are more than just our actions.

And the whole sermon on the Mount is you have heard that it was said, but I tell you this, when it talks about less than the sermon on the Mount, you've heard it was said not to commit adultery. I'm telling you, don't look at a woman with lustful intent in your heart that tells me that sin, the actions of sins, well, that's the manifestation of the heart.

And so the same is true here, that your heart needs to be bent towards forgiveness first and to not. And oftentimes that is an exhausting exercise, but that is still what we desire of God for us. Therefore that's what we freely bestow upon others. We are freed to forgive. And that that is, I think, the ultimate intention of that.

Not simply he wasn't just giving a math equation there, for sure.

So I feel like that may cover the most of those questions. Is there anything that you feel like maybe we need to discuss a little further? Just one other thing that's already come up more than once, but I think it's valuable for us to emphasize it. Okay. Should I forgive before a person even asks me to and why?

I think that goes back to the question that was asked of Jesus. How many times should I forgive? My question would be perhaps the right. The better question is how much freedom do I want in my life? How much do you want to be beholden to someone when you refuse forgiveness, or when you hesitate to forgive, then how?

However they have wronged you, you empower that wrong even more so, right? And so my ability to forgive you, Barry, is really completely disconnected from your desire for forgiveness, to be quite honest. So my relationship to you, I desire for us to have a relationship. And even if I don't desire for us to have a strong relationship, if I've just I've been so wrong that I don't necessarily want to get back to that relationship.

I still want both of us to be right with God. I just don't want to be in the same room for a little while, you know? Right. So if that's the case, then again, the heart condition has to be geared towards forgiveness. And I do think it takes time sometimes for us to move through the emotional circumstance to sort through, because certain offenses have a greater casualty, have a greater impact either physically or emotionally.

And so it is often times days, weeks, months, years, even a lifetime to work through some of that. And I think the the call for us as Christians, if we have a ministry of reconciliation, then the expectation from God is to be working towards that. I don't know that it's always instant. It's not a magic trick, you know, it's not a flip of the switch, but it is.

Jason Helton Zoom class on Forgiveness

It is a purpose and a direction in which we're always trying to walk, and sometimes we walk faster than other times. And I would add to it to recognize and give ourselves grace. And here's what I mean by that. If I live, if I grew up in and lived in an environment where I observed people not forgiving, maybe it was my parents, maybe it was the people around me.

But if all I ever saw was people not being willing to forgive, what am I going to learn? Oh, here's what you do when someone offends you. But what are we told in Romans that as Christians were supposed to do, we're supposed to be transformed by the word so that I become something I was not before I learned to do something I didn't know how to do before.

Consequently, I believe as Christians and you've said this many times in different ways today. It is that mindset. It is teaching myself to be prepared first, to forgive. And the quicker I forgive, the sooner I am free from the prison and the pain of what was caused by the offense. So can't thank you enough today for your words.

Thank you enough for your teaching and taking the time to share with more than folks that have gathered with us from across the African continent today, I hope that all of you have been blessed. David, if you would go ahead and open your microphone so that we know for sure that we've we've got you. Are you there?

I'm here. All right. This is our teacher from a class in the past. Some of you will recognize Brother David. He's going to lead us in a closing prayer. So let's join together in that. David, would you lead us now, please? Dear father, we're thankful that you've allowed us to be together and study your word. We're thankful for not only the words that you have in the Bible, but the examples that you give so that we can understand what the words really mean.

David Morrison's prayer:

Father, we pray that especially in this subject, you would help us to grow. Help us not be so concerned with ourselves and whether someone has wronged us or not, but to learn to have the same attitude that Jesus had to choose to forgive and help us to grow in the ways that we need to grow, so that we can become the kind of person that you want each of us to be.

Thank you again for being with us and for the forgiveness that we have in Jesus. In his name we pray. Amen. Thank you for the prayer, David. To thank you to everyone that's been here today. I hope the class has been a blessing. I'm sure that it has. Jason, again, thank you for your time, for your thoughts, for your experience, and for what you brought to us today from the Word of God.