

# FORGIVE

## WEEK ELEVEN:

### The Extension of Forgiveness

#### WEEK 11 VERSES:

- Ephesians 4:30-32
- Mark 11:25
- Matthew 5:21-24
- Matthew 18:15-17
- Romans 12:16-20
- Luke 17:11-19
- Colossians 1:19-20
- Deuteronomy 32:35

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF ME & WHERE I FEEL LED TO EXTEND/SEEK FORGIVENESS TO/FROM OTHERS...

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**MEDIATION REQUEST**  
This form is for those looking for relational assistance in the midst of conflict or working through reconciliation.

This sermon marks the end of our 11-week series on forgiveness. Throughout this series, we have seen how forgiveness is a reflection of the gift God has given to us through Jesus—grace and mercy from the Cross in response to our sinful rebellion. This series ends on a practical note of what it means to extend forgiveness and pursue reconciliation with others, including when we have wronged others *and* when we are the one who has been wronged. It is important to understand that forgiveness is a commitment that precedes an

emotional change—feelings like anger can be righteous and healthy as we understand the cost of wrongdoing against us. However, we are called to confront sin lovingly and work toward restoration with those who wrong us. Jesus calls us to overcome evil by not repaying evil with evil, blessing those who persecute us, forgiving without revenge, maintaining relationship (if possible/safe), meeting needs, and acting humbly. The ability to be humble comes directly from our understanding of the Cross, as we see how we are also sinners in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

#### Vertical

- How can remembering what Christ did for us give us motivation and ability to forgive others?
- How does the Gospel lead to spiritual humility and spiritual wealth?
- In the Luke 17 story of the ten healed lepers, are you more like the one or the nine? How so?

#### Internal

- How can we forgive people when emotions like anger, hurt, and bitterness are present? What are some practical steps forward?
- How can we discern between righteous anger and sinful anger? What causes our anger to become sinful?
- How has your understanding of forgiveness (from God and/or toward others) grown through this series? What is one thing you want to apply?

#### Horizontal

- Why is it important that we see forgiveness as a commitment and process rather than a one-time event?
- How does the goal of restoration reshape how we confront others?
- What circumstances in your life right now may require you to practice forgiveness? How can your community support you?
- What are some specific ways God is calling you to overcome evil with good in your life?

#### Action Steps

- Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for His forgiveness toward you and ongoing restoration in your life.
- Based on the questions above about creating a culture of forgiveness and your own life circumstances, discuss specific next steps with someone else (family member, friend, GC, etc.) and prayerfully commit to moving forward in faith.
- Take some time to share your personal feedback on this series (see second sheet).
- Review and work through this week's additional resources: "A Therapist's Guide to Anger."

# THE PRACTICAL EXTENSION OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is not first and foremost about emotion, forgiveness is often granted before it is felt.

- **Forgiveness is a promise to not exact the price of sin from the person who hurt you.**
- **Forgiveness is a promise we make despite our feelings.**

What can we do to build a practice of offering forgiveness:

1. Take an inventory of the ways you can exact payment from the offender and refrain from doing so.
2. When speaking with the person you should be courteous.
3. When talking to others don't prejudice people against them.
4. Don't destroy the other person's reputation.
5. When thinking of the other person pray for them and yourself.

## **The Truth about Reconciliation** – Matthew 18

1. **Go privately.** Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.
2. **Go positively.** Jesus says we confront to win the person, not the argument. We persuade in order to restore and maintain the relationship.
3. **Go repeatedly** (if necessary).
4. **Involve the community.** Keller writes, *"It behooves the person taking the initiative to make sure that the 'sin' is not simply a matter of personal preference; the eventual involvement of the 'one or two' and then of the church should minimize that danger."*
5. **"Tell it to the church."** This phrase could simply mean (in our context) taking it to the elders or leaders. The purpose is not to humiliate, shame, or punish but to appeal and persuade.

## **The Truth about Reconciliation** – Romans 12

The Apostle Paul called it overcoming evil with good. **Evil wins when** it distorts our relationships with others. **Evil wins when** it distorts our view of ourself. **Evil wins when**, it helps the perpetrator in their self-justification.

1. **Pray for them.** Paul says to "Bless those who persecute you."
1. **Forgive them.** Paul says, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil...Do not take revenge...but overcome evil with good."
1. **Don't avoid them.** Rom 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Even if the other person remains hostile so you can't restore the relationship, don't contribute to the hostility.

1. **Give them what they need, to whatever degree they allow.** Rom 12:20 If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink."
1. **Do it humbly.** Rom 12:16 says we do this without pride or conceit.

Human forgiveness is a gift *given* by a sinful person saved by sheer grace to another.

**Before love and forgiveness is something we give, it is something we receive.** We learn to love and forgive by first *experiencing* it, AND THEN passing it on.

# FORGIVE SERIES FEEDBACK

As we conclude our series on forgiveness, we're eager to hear stories of how God moved in your heart and life! If you have a story or feedback to share, please feel free to share. *(Please note submissions will be visible to Element elders/staff.)*



## TWO WAYS TO SUBMIT:

1) fill out paper form below and turn it into Welcome Center, or email copy to [connect@ourelement.org](mailto:connect@ourelement.org)

2) Go to: <https://ourelement.churchcenter.com/people/forms/614641> (or scan QR code)

## How did this forgiveness series affect you?

Examples...

What were your main takeaways? How has God moved in a specific relationship/circumstance? How have you come to understand God's forgiveness of you? How is He leading you forward? What are you still wrestling with?

I am okay with part of my story/feedback being shared anonymously.

## How can we pray for you?

I would like an elder/staff member to follow up with me. My contact info:

# A THERAPIST'S GUIDE TO ANGER

From my experience, it seems that anger is the most misunderstood, abused, and vilified emotion. Considering how prevalent expressions of anger seem to be in daily interactions (just take note of the division in our world!)—whether in “real life” or within the social media space—it is amazing that so many struggle to name anger or know what to do with it. This mishandling can be amplified in the Church, as anger itself can be unilaterally interpreted as sinful, and therefore dismissed.

However, emotions, as part of our embodied experience, can offer valuable information not just for our relationships with other people, but also with God. Our experience of emotion is certainly fallen, but there is still a reflection of what it means to be made in God’s image. In that view, anger is worth paying attention to.

## UNDERSTANDING ANGER

We know that God created anger and even exhibits it Himself in His anger toward sin and injustice. That alone should reveal to us that anger itself is not inherently sinful. On a human level, then, it’s important to try to understand how anger can be helpful. I often describe anger as the emotion that appears to prompt us to fight or advocate for someone or something—ourselves, a loved one, a vulnerable person/group, or a cause.

At its best, anger reminds us to fight for what is just and right (reflecting God’s perfect righteousness and justice). Acknowledging anger also brings depth to realizing the cost of forgiveness. At its worst, anger centers on selfish desires/entitlements—reflecting an unrighteousness that elevates the self).

In either case....that is critical information! A righteous anger brings us closer to the heart of God as we identify with His justice. It can serve as a motivator to do good in the world and fight for “the least of these.” It can also prompt us to reflect on whether we have been wronged by the sin of another so we can pursue forgiveness and possible reconciliation. In recognizing selfish anger, on the other hand, we can identify the ways in which pride has elevated our standing over others and repent of where we have failed to submit. It’s possible that we have chosen to fight for our own perceived needs/desires that are actually ungodly.

## IDENTIFYING ANGER

When I ask someone about the possible role of anger in their life, its often dismissed because they are envisioning some extreme example—wanting to yell or punch a wall, perhaps. It’s important to recognize, though, that all core emotions exist on a spectrum. The core emotion of “anger” can look very different depending on the person or the circumstance. For instance, take a look at these emotions under anger on a feelings wheel:

Threatened	Critical	Devastated	Enraged	Suspicious
Hateful	Disapproving	Insecure	Provoked	Skeptical
Mad	Disappointed	Jealous	Hostile	Sarcastic
Aggressive	Awful	Resentful	Infuriated	
Frustrated	Avoidant	Violated	Irritated	
Distant	Embarrassed	Furious	Withdrawn	

I imagine that right now, it would be easier for you to name “hateful” as an expression of anger compared to “withdrawn.” However, they come from the same core emotion, which tells us that at some level, we perceive that a boundary has been crossed or a wrongdoing has occurred.

It’s important to note that this may not necessarily be the truth—but it absolutely speaks to how we are *interpreting* reality.

In understanding discipleship as ever increasing submission to the lordship of Jesus, there is value in practicing awareness of an emotion like anger. I encourage you to think about the more subtle ways anger

might show up in your own life. Oftentimes, we may not consciously identify a feeling as anger, but our bodies physically let us know it's there. Perhaps we feel heat, tension, trembling, or a quickened heart rate. Paying attention to our bodies can help us learn patterns about our own emotions (and therefore, interpretations) when words fail.

## **ACTING ON ANGER**

What to do once we identify the presence of anger?

### **1. Spent time reflecting on/praying about what anger is telling you. Making space for it allows for deeper examination. Ask the Spirit to bring clarity and conviction.**

- What is your anger telling you about your expectations?
- On whose behalf are you looking to fight/advocate for?
- If advocating for yourself, what is your motive? What is the basis for how you expect to be treated?
- What does your anger say about who/what you love?

### **2. Acknowledge/name the anger. Consider...**

- Acknowledging the anger internally ("I'm feeling upset because \_\_\_\_\_")
- And/or acknowledging your anger before God through prayer
- And/or acknowledging your anger to one who has wronged you

### **3. If you find that your anger is unrighteous/selfish, confess to God.**

- Confess the ways your anger is misaligned with God's desires
- Consider how the Gospel speaks to your entitlement and pride. How does the Cross level reality and bring perspective to what ultimately matters?
- Consider the humility and sacrificial nature of Jesus

### **4. If you find that your anger is righteous, consider how God is leading you to act on it:**

- Where are you being led to fight for justice?
- Can a loving conversation with the wrongdoer bring awareness of sin and the need for repentance?
- Does your anger indicate the need for a protective boundary to be set?
- Is your anger prompting you to pursue forgiveness and possible reconciliation?
- How can you resist the temptation to express your anger unhealthily?

## **ANGER AND PEOPLE-PLEASING**

For many, anger can seem foreign and/or frightening because it is associated with a lack of safety—even on a visceral, implicit level. A "fawn response" (or chronic people-pleasing tendency) favors maintaining peace at all costs—including ignoring anger. This can often lead to inauthentic relationships and growing resentment as needs are not identified/expressed, as well as the flourishing of mistreatment that goes unnamed/unchallenged. It can also lead to quick "forgiveness" that fails to acknowledge the cost.

For many, the thought of acknowledging anger or confronting others is associated with abandonment or real/perceived threat to safety. While theologically, we can remind each other of the pitfalls of idolizing others, it's important to understand that this kind of response can actually be hardwired into our nervous system through trauma and abuse. The beauty, though, is that God can heal and restore, and He often does so through His people.

We can go a long way in helping to heal such responses as we create safe, confessional spaces that eagerly acknowledge our failings before a holy God. Doing so allows us to turn toward another with love, humility, and gentleness as we are assured of our own reconciled standing with Him. When we receive rebuke non-defensively and invite the Holy Spirit to work in us through such feedback, we not only welcome our own sanctification, but also encourage safety in those whom God is calling to take such risks.

A healthy understanding of anger—at both the individual and community levels—can lead us to pursue justice and restoration. It also adds weight to the cost of forgiveness and our understanding of grace.