

Week beginning: 29th Oct 2006

Theme: Forgiveness

Welcome: Paul tells us that Jesus once said ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ – is this your experience in the case of *forgiveness*?

Worship: Don’t forget to worship in your cell meeting. It is through worship that we draw near to God! Has someone in the cell got a favourite hymn about forgiveness? – Sing it! **Also – read together the Poem printed on page 2 then discuss the following:**

Discuss – Here are three worldly descriptions of forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness is the healing of wounds caused by another. You choose to let go of a past wrong and no longer be hurt by it. Forgiveness is a strong move to make, like turning your shoulders sideways to walk quickly on a crowded pavement. It's your move.
2. It really doesn't matter if the person who hurt you deserves to be forgiven. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. You have things to do and you want to move on.
3. Forgiveness does not always lead to a healed relationship. Some people are not capable of love - and it might be wise to just forget them along with your anger, wish them well, and let them go their way.

Do you agree with any of these? Can you think of a better description of forgiveness?

Word: The Bible makes it clear, through the Words of Jesus Christ, that believers who refuse to forgive will face serious consequences. Read Matthew 6:14-15.

Teaching Slot: During one period of his life, John Wesley was a missionary in the American colonies—primarily in the area that would become the state of Georgia. There was a general by the name of Oglethorpe with whom Wesley had some dealings. General Oglethorpe was a great military leader, but he had a reputation as a harsh and brutal man. One day he said to John Wesley, “I never forgive.” To which Wesley replied, “Then, sir, I hope you never sin.” Do you think that Wesley had Matthew 6:14-15 in mind when he made this remark? Why?

Forgiveness of others is absolutely crucial in order for believers to experience the forgiveness of, and restored fellowship with, their Heavenly Father. Such restored fellowship will also remove a major hindrance or roadblock to effective prayer.

Witness - One day a man was walking along a trail in East Africa with some friends when he suddenly became aware of a delightful odour that filled the air. He looked up into the trees and around at the bushes in an effort to discover where it was coming from. Then his friends told him to look down at the small blue flower growing along the path. Each time they crushed the tiny blossoms under their feet, more of its sweet perfume was released into the air. His friends told him that it was called the 'forgiveness flower'. The forgiveness flower does not wait until we ask forgiveness for crushing it. It does not release its fragrance in measured doses nor does it require us to pay compensation. It does not even ask for an apology. It merely lives up to its name and forgives-freely, fully and richly. - **Is God calling upon you to forgive someone today?**

Forgiveness

God's word is clear and simple
 About what I must do
 When I have been offended
 By friend or foe's misuse:
 "Forgive...and be forgiven"
 I dare not keep a score--
 Seventy times seven
 Times seven hundred more.

When I am unforgiving,
 The battle I'll not win;
 For I need my Father's mercy
 To blot out all my sin.
 Forgiving is not easy
 Yet I know it can be done:
 I look to Christ my Savior,
 The Holy, Sinless One.

When Jesus died upon the cross
 His words rang clear and true,
 "Father, please forgive them,
 For they know not what they do."
 As the Precious Lamb of God
 Christ longs for me to see:
 Forgiving is the power
 That sets my spirit free!
 Forgiveness is God's wondrous gift
 That sets my spirit free!