



Forgiveness Benefits and Lack of Forgiveness Consequences*

Forgiveness is at the heart of Christianity. There is no activity of Christian life that is more closely aligned to the love of God and the willing sacrifice of Christ than forgiving others.

- Faithful followers of Christ will graciously grant forgiveness to those who have sinned against them in light of being forgiven by the Lord.

Ephesians 4:32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- When believers forgive others in a biblical manner, they demonstrate their love for the Lord by being obedient to His Word (1 John 5:3). When believers forgive, their love for the Lord is evidenced and their love for others is demonstrated (1 John 4:20-21).

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

1 John 4:20-21, If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- In practicing forgiveness, believers heed the two great commandments.

Matthew 22:37-39, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

- Believers who obey God's Word by forgiving others also have the potential for a vibrant and productive prayer life.

1 John 3:22, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what please him.

- Believers display the difference Jesus has made in their lives when they forgive biblically.

Matthew 5:13-16, "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" [Emphasis added]

Believers who practice forgiveness receive spiritual benefits but, on the other hand, consequences accrue to those choosing not to forgive.

- Since forgiveness is not a suggestion but is a divine command, believers sin by failing to obey the Lord if they do not forgive others.

James 4:17, whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

- When believers disobey God's Word, they can expect the corrective discipline of the Lord.

Hebrews 12:6-7, For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

- One of the ways that the Lord disciplines unforgiving believers is to limit their prayer effectiveness.

Psalms 66:18, If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

- When a believer chooses to sin for a period of time (which includes a refusal to forgive), spiritual discernment will diminish.

Hebrews 5:14, But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

James 1:22, But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

- The Lord also disciplines unforgiving believers by withholding forgiveness of their everyday shortcomings. This withholding of forgiveness does not negate the eternal family relationship between God and His children but vibrant, on-going communion is hindered.

Matthew 6:14-15, For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Mark 11:25-26, whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

May we honor the Lord and demonstrate our love for Christ by forgiving others.

*Excerpted from [Forgiveness: The Possible Impossibility](#)