



FORGIVE and Be FORGIVEN

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In studying the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6, I found each verse to be an important key for more effective prayer. So in this study I want to focus on verse 12: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." We must be able to implement this verse. It is one thing to talk about casting Satan out of the earth, but we are still limited in our ability to do that if we do not learn to forgive. This is perhaps the most important verse on prayer in the Bible. If we do not walk in this verse about forgiving others, nothing else we have learned about prayer will work.



Forgiveness Works with Tremendous Simplicity

How do we understand forgiveness? We could get into a detailed study about the mysteries of God concerning forgiveness and sanctification. We could expound the passages in Genesis and Leviticus about the sacrifices. We could dig into the meanings of the Hebrew and Greek words in the Scriptures that give us insight into the principle of transference. However, all we need to do is focus on the simplicity of what Matthew 6:12 is saying. Forgiveness may be one of the most mystical concepts in the Bible, but it functions with tremendous simplicity. When we pray, "Forgive us our debts," we are asking God to forgive the debt that we have to Him because of our sin. The wages—the cost—of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and because we have sinned, we owe God our lives. It is the price we must pay. One way or another, you give your life to God, either voluntarily in salvation or when He takes your life as a debt in death.

The concept of forgiving debt is quite simple and easy to understand. Little children understand it. If someone owes you money and that person comes to you and says, “Forgive me the debt,” you understand exactly what that means. If you forgive the debt, it means that person owes you nothing. Likewise, if God forgives your debt to Him, it means that you no longer owe Him the payment of your life. We are simply reading Matthew 6:12 literally and accepting that it means exactly what it says. And when we do that, we are confronted by something. The Lord said to pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” In the same way that God forgives our debts, we also must forgive our debtors. Suddenly this concept is not so easy anymore. Forgiving others in the same way that God forgives us is a hard concept—not just to understand, but to live.



How Often Shall I Forgive My Brother?

Who are our debtors? Our debtors are those who owe us because they have sinned against us or taken from us. This debt owed to us is that which we hold in our own thinking against people. We build up and hold onto reasons why others owe us for what they do or what they have done. We are the ones who make people indebted to us because of their actions. Clearly, the debt we feel others owe us is not on the same level as the debt we owe God, and Yeshua (Jesus) gave a parable to make this point.

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.” (Matthew 18:21–23)

The king that Yeshua is referring to is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). He is the King who wants to settle accounts with his slaves—and we are His slaves. It is clear that the Lord is talking about us and our relationship with Him.

“When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to Him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.” (Matthew 18:24–25)

This slave owed the king an enormous debt. How could he ever repay a debt like that? The debt was so great that the slave, his wife and children, his house, and everything he owned would have to be sold to repay it. Our debt of sin is also very great. Just as it was with that slave, our debt not only affects us; it affects everyone we are around—the entire family of God.

“So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.” (Matthew 18:26–27)



This Is a Picture of Our Salvation

The Lord felt compassion for us. He forgave our debt completely. It is not merely a matter of being patient with us and saying, “You can pay it over time.” He says it is completely forgiven. There is no debt anymore. It is a complete release. “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe’” (Matthew 18:28). His master had forgiven his very large debt, but this slave refused to forgive his fellow slave’s small debt. He screamed at him, “Pay me what you owe! Pay me back!”

“So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on

your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.” (Matthew 18:29–34)

This time the punishment was much worse. Originally, the king was going to sell the slave; now he turned him over to the torturers until he repaid all that was owed to him. “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).



Can We Lose Our Salvation?

One of the great doctrinal questions about salvation is, “If you are saved once, are you saved forever?” Can you lose your salvation? What I read from these verses is that it is possible for God to restore our original debt. We have received forgiveness for our debts, but do not think those debts cannot come back on us if we do not forgive. Yeshua said to pray, “Heavenly Father, forgive us our debts while we are forgiving those who owe a debt to us.” Then at the end of His teaching on prayer, He said, “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14–15). Of the entire Lord’s Prayer, this is the only part that Yeshua commented on when He finished His teaching. Of all the things He could have talked about, of all the concepts in the Lord’s Prayer that He could have taught more about, the only thing Yeshua emphasized is our requirement to forgive others. That is because everything depends on it—everything. If we stand before God to pray, we are wasting our time if we do not forgive. According to Mark 11:25, when we stand to pray, the first thing we do is forgive. If we do not, the rest of it is a waste of time because our debt is put back on us, and God does not hear us.

We begin our prayer by entering into the Father's presence (Matthew 6:6). Everything about prayer is absolutely dependent upon our access to the presence of the Father, to stand before His face, to boldly come into His presence (Hebrews 4:16, KJV). Christ is the door, but with no forgiveness there is no way to enter in. The only way we come into the Father's presence is through the forgiveness of our debt. If that debt comes back, we are excluded from His presence. There is no way to begin to pray if we cannot enter into the presence of the Father; so whenever you pray, you must begin with forgiveness. Forgive those who owe you so that your Father will forgive you. Only then will you have access. Only then can you enter His presence. Only then can you come before Him and begin to contend with Him.



Forgiveness Is Not Easy

Forgiveness is not necessarily easy. It certainly was not easy for Christ to forgive while He was on the cross.

When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:33-37)

It was not easy for Yeshua to utter the words, “Father, forgive them.” Imagine what it was like for Him on the cross observing all that was going on around Him. People were mocking Him and jeering Him. There were those who were stealing His belongings. They took His clothes, which in those days were very valuable. People ridiculed everything about Him, saying, “Oh, so You’re the Savior! If You’re the King, then save Yourself. Come down off the cross.” His response to all this was, “Father, forgive them,” and those words triggered our salvation.

Can we come to the place where we forgive others just as God forgives us? We know we cannot do it in ourselves, but we know that He did it and that He is able to do it. Yeshua forgave when He was in a very difficult situation. The need to forgive never arises when you are alone in meditation, resting in a place of perfect peace. The need to forgive comes during a time when people are stealing your garments, mocking you, and accusing you. It is not something you can fake. You do not just say, “Okay, Lord, I forgive everybody,” and then start praying. Remember what Yeshua said: you must forgive your brother from your heart (Matthew 18:35). It is not just words; forgiveness has to come from your heart. When God forgives our sin, He forgets it (Jeremiah 31:34). You have not forgiven if you have just buried it in your subconscious mind and still hold the offense in your memory. Forgive for real until you have forgotten.



God's Presence Dwells in the Place of Forgiveness

This is not a philosophy. Debt is a real thing. Your sin does not just evaporate. It has to go somewhere. In accounting you cannot just throw numbers away. Those numbers have to go somewhere, and the debt you are holding against people has to go somewhere. It has to

leave. You have to find a way to let go of it. You have to put it on the Lord. You must bring it to the cross. Your heart must let go of it, and it has to go onto Christ. Only He can get rid of it. “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!” (Psalm 32:1). Do you wonder sometimes, “Where did my blessing go?” Are you as blessed as you should be? Is there a sense of blessing in your life? Is the presence of God in your life? Have you sought His presence many times, only to ask, “Where is Your presence?” His presence dwells in the place of forgiveness.

The tabernacle in the wilderness was the place where the sacrifices were made, and God’s forgiveness was administered. It is also where the column of smoke and fire appeared. It appeared above the tabernacle (Numbers 9:15–16). His presence did not just randomly dwell over the whole camp; it rested over the place of forgiveness. The Holy of Holies was where the forgiveness took place, and that is where His presence dwelled (Hebrews 9:2–3, 6–7; Leviticus 16:2). His presence with us will always dwell at our place of forgiveness. When we are forgiving, then His presence will dwell with us. Where is our blessing? Where is the anointing in our lives? The blessing is His presence. “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven” (Psalm 32:1). If my debt is gone, I should be blessed. I should live in blessing. I should live in His presence. Our lives should be blessed because we have become a place of forgiveness.



What Happened to Our Health and Strength?

As the psalmist says, “When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Psalm 32:3). Do you wonder sometimes, “Where is my health? Where is my strength?” Why is it that we as the Body of Christ are not seeing the release, the freedom, the healings, and the health that we should have? “For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (Psalm 32:4). Now this is something we can relate to: experiencing our energy being sapped away like a fever, like the heat of summer.

The psalmist continues,

I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.
Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found. (Psalm 32:5–6)

When we pray, He will be found—when we forgive. Therefore, we refuse to keep silent about our sin. We refuse to harbor any longer the debts that we have determined against others. If you forgive others, your Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive, then your Father will not forgive you (Matthew 6:14–15). This is a hard saying. If we accept this statement literally, then we are in trouble because to some degree our debt is coming back upon us unless we can forgive. We must forgive. There must be a way to let go of every debt that we are holding in our minds and in our hearts against others. The Word of God says to forgive men. Forgive everyone. It has to be total. We must get out of our hearts anything we are holding against others. Lord, help us. Teach us to forgive. Show us where we are holding onto the things that are our destruction.



By His Blood We Can Forgive

Do you say, “I don’t know if I can do this”? You can do this. Christ did it; therefore, the door is open for you. Get rid of the debt that you are holding against others. Nothing is worth the debt that you are holding on to. It cannot have value when compared to God’s presence, when compared to His blessing in your life. What value can exist for that which you hold against people? Is it worth losing His presence and His blessing, or worse, having your debt to Him come back on you?

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!
How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit! (Psalm 32:1-2)

Forgive! Do not just say, “Oh, I let go. I’m not holding onto anything.” Do not deceive yourself. Do not be a person of deceit. Forgive in truth with your heart. Lord, deliver us from the deception where we say we have forgiven, but we have not.

Yeshua, by Your blood we can forgive. This forgiveness courses as power in Your blood. As we partake of Your blood, we partake of the ability to forgive just as You forgave. Father, forgive us; we let go of the debts of others. Yeshua, Your body was broken for us, and Your blood was given to us, and in them is the power to forgive. We let go of the debts completely, thoroughly, until our hearts, our thoughts, and our subconscious minds forget the debts completely. Let the debts of others be obliterated from our beings, in the name of Yeshua our Lord. We forgive from our hearts. Today we let go. We position ourselves as those whose prayers will be heard and answered because we are in a place of forgiveness. Father, let Your blessing rest upon us as it did on the Holy of Holies because we constantly exercise the release of debt to all men.



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All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB1995).

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel in the land of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God* and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

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For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org.

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power, and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish foundations of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes our ability to:

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- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
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