



Forgiveness Gives Twice

True worship:

***Honoring God by extending forgiveness,
a sacrificial gift paid for by love***

“... and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”
(Matthew 6:12)

Along life’s journey, no individual is exempt from being offended or hurt by another. This makes forgiveness a desperate universal need. Memories of injustice haunt us, ready to pounce at the least trigger, causing us to re-live the offense. Whether we need to receive or extend forgiveness, the power of forgiveness is priceless.

God’s word is full of references on forgiveness, possibly because it doesn’t come “naturally” to us. Forgiveness costs the forgiver at least TWICE, and often more. The first is the cost of broken relationship, peace, reputation or other things of a tangible nature. A marked debt incurs. Then there’s the cost of paying the debt by releasing the debtor—again, paid or absorbed by the one who forgives.

We offended God by rejecting our relationship with Him in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve lost the fellowship of His presence, but God also suffered consequences, losing intimacy with His cherished creation. Christ’s life offers the greatest example of the sacrifice of forgiveness. God paid again by sending Jesus to suffer in our place of punishment, knowing we were worth every drop of blood. Forgiveness and love pays the cost – but receives immeasurably more!

Heart of the Matter

**We can fully enter into His presence
when we are free from sin and unforgiveness.**

Response

As you bring your gift today, consider those who have offended you. Christ placed value on mankind by giving His life to pay the debt. We extend that value by forgiving others. Place your offering as a *symbolic* drawing from His account that is “paid in full” for you and the one who hurt you.

You can’t buy forgiveness, but your offering speaks for your heart. Commit to pray for those who offended you and bless them. *God’s purposes transcend the deepest wounds.*

Memory Verse

“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

- Matthew 5:23-24

Notes:



Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.

- Louis B. Smedes



Pay Attention

True worship:

Listening responsively to the Spirit of God.

“Speak, Lord, for thy servant is listening.” (I Samuel 3:10)

Jordon is pleasantly communicative and I enjoy hearing his thoughts as he shares his processing of his life and dreams. But after a morning full of chatter, I was trying to prepare him for an upcoming school event. Every time I spoke, he’d fill in with something that was on his mind. Sadly, he left unaware of what he needed to do.

And then the Lord so gently reminded me of that scenario as I was bringing my prayer needs to Him. *My purposes are based on My understanding and wisdom; I want to impart much to you, but you are more concerned with your thoughts than you are with Mine.* Ouch!

Listening gives value to the speaker as well as to what is spoken. The Hebrew word for listen is *shema*, and it means *hearing PLUS doing*.

Truly listening means:

- To attribute worth to God and to simply “tarry” in His presence – to abide, to linger expectantly.

- To be with Him in His purposes, not running ahead with your own or wondering how it affects you. Being present in His presence.

- To set aside all agenda, all distractions, and like a contented child gaze into His face and be still, ready to follow His bidding. Is there anything that can be a greater measure of surrender of our love and surrender to His love?

Heart of the Matter

We worship by listening responsively to what God says, with a heart committed to following through.

Response

How can we offer God our full attention in this moment (or this week)?

Lord, in this quiet moment, we set aside our own plans and desires, listening for Your purposes for our time and resources, that they will build Your kingdom on earth. As Your “managers,” we seek to know how You would desire us to distribute Your assets. Not our will, but Yours be accomplished. Amen

Memory Verse

“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.”

- Psalm 27:4

Notes:



Listen. It is the greatest compliment you can give, that I am worth hearing.

- Dona Hoffman, *Yes, Lord*



The Widow's Mites

True worship:

Giving that holds nothing back.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing . . . for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:42, 44)

After speaking about the scribes' concern for their public image (those who "for the sake of appearance offer long prayers"), Jesus sat down and observed people casting offerings into the treasury. Since Jesus isn't concerned about the outward appearance like we are, but rather focuses on the heart, He's also not impressed with amounts of coins jingling in the pots, or how many zeros after the number written on our checks. Public image can't stand up to the private scrutiny of Jesus. We may see what goes into the basket; He sees what is kept behind. One can give without truly loving, but one cannot truly love without giving something of themselves.

The widow's m-i-g-h-t was found in a heart that deeply loved God; a love that expressed itself in returning what her Lord had given her. Jesus said, "This poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on." Because she gave fully from a heart of love, her meager gift serves as Jesus' example, not only to the disciples then, but also for us today.

Heart of the Matter

Generosity is a spiritual force that has the power to enlarge and expand our kingdom influence.

- Keith Yoder

Response

Evaluate your own heart today as you prepare your offering. Does God see a generous spirit?

Lord, as we offer our gifts, our hearts are not hidden from You. We pray You would be pleased with our gifts. Our minds consider those who have little, like the widow, but are mighty in love. Our gifts align with your heart toward those who are needy and we offer them as Your provision.

Memory Verse

“For they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

- Mark 12:44

Notes:



God does not measure generosity by the size of our gift, but the size of our sacrifice.

- Chip Ingram



Team Hoyt

True worship:

Giving our all to others from a heart of love for the God who created them.

Team Hoyt is a team that competes in marathons and triathlons. They inspire many, from high-level executives to sports wannabes, those with strength, and those with disabilities. What about this father-son team brings people to tears, renews hope, and encourages the will to continue despite overwhelming odds? The son, Rick, was born with athetoid cerebral palsy, which leaves him with no ability to either walk or talk. Very intelligent and deeply sensitive, he wanted to participate in a five-mile benefit run for someone paralyzed in an accident. Though not a distance runner, Dick, the father, committed himself to fulfilling Rick's dreams, and began the rigorous training. Thus began "Team Hoyt." To date, they have competed in 942 events, including triathlons, Boston marathons, and biked and ran across the USA in 1992.

Dick runs pushing Rick in a specially designed wheelchair. When Dick cycles, Rick gets the front view on his seat-pod from his wheelchair, attached to the front of the bike. When Dick swims, he pulls Rick in a small, firmly-stabilized boat. In fulfilling Rick's dream, Dick has also discovered fulfillment and purpose beyond the two of them. It's been said that Dick is the body, providing the strength, and Rick is the heart, providing the inspiration and motivation.

Heart of the Matter

One can give without loving, but cannot love without giving from that which flows deep inside.

Response

How does this story encourage you to excel more? In what ways can you give your strength to another? Or inspire another to use what God has given them?

As we give today, we consider it a privilege to dedicate it to the Father's heart, the One who supplies us with His strength.

Memory Verse

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
Whose heart is set on pilgrimage."

- Psalm 84:5

Notes:

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When we got home . . . Rick wrote on the computer, 'Dad, when I run it feels like my disability disappears.' So, that was a very powerful message to me.

- Dick Hoyt