

Further Bible Study Questions

- A) The context of Jesus Christ's parable in Matthew 18:21-25 (re-read the passage first) was Peter's question about forgiving his brother (whether his biological brother or spiritual brother is not specified, both certainly are addressed in the answer). Jesus Christ's parable reveals that when we receive something from God, we are responsible to share it with others, especially those who are closest to us (brothers, etc.). Do you have a "forgiven" relationship with those who are closest to you? With God, with family, with friends, etc.? Is there anyone who, even if they do not deserve your forgiveness, should receive it -- based on God's forgiveness of you (despite the fact that we do not deserve the forgiveness)?
- B) Sometimes, when we receive a gift from someone, we forget what life was like "before the gift." I remember this all-to-well when I give gifts to my children. Before they received the gift, there was a hole in their life. After they receive the gift, the hole is filled and the gift becomes a regular part of their lives. It is not uncommon for me to find a gift which I have given to my children laying around in the back yard, covered with dirt and grime -- forgotten entirely by my kids. Salvation can be like that for the Christian. We tend to forget about the gift and the Giver... This is why the Bible works so hard to keep us focused on what is real, that we are saved, sinners who have been transformed into saints... How can you live a more grateful life in light of the great gift of salvation? Are there areas where you can have a fresh response to great gift of Jesus in your life?
- C) Re-read Colossians 1:19-23. Salvation (being reconciled) clearly leads to a lifestyle which, as it says in 2nd Corinthians 5:18-20 (re-read the passage real quick) leads to being an agent (or ambassador) of reconciliation with others. This is an easier task when it involves young children, or receptive friends/family. But what about when it involves those who are "hostile and evil" (Colossians 1:21)? How do we reconcile those who do not desire or care about being reconciled? Praise the Lord that someone shared with me, even though I showed no sign of caring! How can you be an agent of reconciliation for those who don't care? Who would this be in your life? How can you "minister" to them?

Building Bridges

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 12th, 2007 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**SHOULD YOU NOT ALSO HAVE
HAD MERCY ON YOUR FELLOW
SLAVE, IN THE SAME WAY THAT
I HAD MERCY ON YOU?
~MATTHEW 18:33 (NASB)**

1) A Story About Being Grateful For The Gift

- A) While Jesus was still on the earth, one of His closest disciples, Simon Peter, came to him and wanted to know whether he needed to forgive others (Matthew 18:21-22).
- B) Jesus goes on to tell a story with a moral (a parable), which better illustrated how a follower of Jesus Christ should respond to their relationship with Jesus (Matthew 18:23-35).
- C) Note the sincerity of the slave with his master in the face of his overwhelming debt (18:24-26). Clearly, initial sincerity is important -- but it is not the entire story!
- D) When the slave treats a "fellow debtor" without mercy, he revealed an ungrateful, and ultimately unresponsive, heart!

- E) Note that the extension of mercy to the slave (forgiveness received) carried a responsibility to extend mercy to other debtors (extending forgiveness).

- F) In the kingdom of God (cf. 18:23), extending what you have received from the Lord to others is not optional -- it is the response of a grateful "slave" (18:35).

- G) Simply put, the "moral" of the parable is to "give to others based on the measure of what God has given to you" (cf. Ephesians 4:32).

2) What Has God Provided For His Followers?

- A) In Colossians, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the extraordinary nature of God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. He begins his explanation by emphasizing the total sufficiency of Jesus to provide salvation (Colossians 1:19).

- B) The Apostle Paul uses several different significant words to describe salvation in his letters in the New Testament. The "big five" are *justification, redemption, forgiveness, adoption, and, as in the passage we are studying, reconciliation*.
 - i) **Justification** ~ the sinner stands before God guilty and condemned, but is declared righteous (Romans 8:33).
 - ii) **Redemption** ~ the sinner stands before God as a slave, but is granted his freedom (Romans 6:18-22).
 - iii) **Forgiveness** ~ the sinner stands before God as a debtor, but the debt is paid and forgotten (Ephesians 1:7).

- iv) **Adoption** ~ the sinner stands before God as a stranger, but is made a son/daughter (Ephesians 1:5).

- v) **Reconciliation** ~ the sinner stands before God as an enemy, but becomes His friend (2nd Corinthians 5:18-20, Colossians 1:20-23).*

- C) Paul's emphasis to the followers of Christ in Colossae is that God has reconciled them from being "hostile, evil in mind" (Colossians 1:21), to becoming a friend of God, "made peace through the blood of the cross" (1:19).

- D) The result of this reconciliation is that followers of Christ are "holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (1:22), the beneficiaries of a transformed relationship with God through faith in the work and person of Jesus Christ!

3) Living The Life Of Reconciliation

- A) Christ's plan is to reconcile "all things" (1:20) to Himself, and to use YOU in that process (2nd Corinthians 5:18-19). We are "ambassadors [of reconciliation] of Christ" (5:20).

- B) Paul encourages the followers of Christ in Colossae to keep living "the faith" (Colossians 1:23). This life includes being a "minister of reconciliation" (2nd Corinthians 5:20).

- C) With our neighbors, our co-workers, acquaintances, fellow students, friends, and family members (everyone) -- we are to "minister to others, based on the measure of what God has given to us" -- we are to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ!

* I am indebted to Dr. John MacArthur's summary of this subject where he wisely notes (please, take note...) that, "a complete understanding of the doctrine of salvation will involve a detailed study of each of these terms." Excerpt from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Colossians & Philemon*, pages #55-56.