**Forgiveness – Simple or Complicated**

Thoughts on the video…

Agree/Disagree: Forgiveness is a choice, not an emotion.

Agree/Disagree: It is possible to forgive someone and still struggle with bitterness and anger.

Let’s look at the definition of forgiveness.

Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

The Greek word translated as “forgive” in the New Testament, aphiēmi, carried a wide range of meanings, including to remit (a debt), to leave (something or someone) alone, to allow (an action), to leave, to send away, to desert or abandon, and even to divorce..

* It is choosing not to hold an offense against someone.
* It is choosing not to dwell on the offense or continue to rehearse it in your thoughts.
* It is choosing not to keep a record (or keep score).

Today we are going to try to answer, according to scripture, the following questions:

1. Does my salvation depend upon my willingness to forgive?
2. Does forgiveness mean reconciliation?

**Does my salvation depend on my willingness to forgive?**

Let’s talk a little bit about salvation:

Eph 2:8-9  For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God**—  (9)  not by works, so that no one can boast.

Rom 3:22-24  This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,  (23)  for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  (24)  and all are **justified freely by his grace** through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Rom 6:23  For the wages of sin is death, **but the gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Agree/Disagree: Any theology where your salvation is dependent upon your actions/works should be rejected completely.

What is Jesus saying?

Mat\_6:14  For ***if*** you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father ***will also*** forgive you. 15  But ***if you do not*** forgive others their sins, your ***Father will not*** forgive your sins.

Mar\_11:25  And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, ***forgive them***, ***so that*** your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Agree/disagree: Jesus is conditioning your forgiveness on your willingness to forgive.

More “IF” to consider:

* 1Jn 1:8-9  ***If*** we claim to be without sin, ***we deceive*** ourselves and the truth is not in us.  (9)  ***If*** we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and ***will*** forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
* If ... we hold fast the word, we will be saved (1 Cor. 15:2).
* If ... we faint not, we shall reap in due season (Gal. 6:9).
* If ... we continue in the faith, we will be unreprovable before Him (Col. 1:22-23).
* If ... we endure, we shall reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).
* If ... we add the Christian virtues, we shall never stumble (2 Pet. 1:10).
* If ... we walk in the light, Christ’s blood keeps us clean (1 Jn. 1:7).

The very simple answer to the question is that if that “if” determines our salvation then so do all these. This theology would fly in the face of Salvation through grace by faith alone.

So, what do all theses if’s mean?

**Does forgiveness mean reconciliation?**

Let’s talk about the concept of reconciliation:

Mat 5:23-24  "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,  (24)  leave your gift there in front of the altar. First **go and be reconciled** to them; then come and offer your gift.

Mat 18:15-17  "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.  (16)  But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'  (17)  If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

There are many questions that arise from this question:

* Should we allow ourselves to be abused by one person so much that continuing forgiveness is necessary?
* In order to truly forgive someone, must I forget the offense?
* Does forgiving someone mean I must allow them back into my life?
* Does forgiving an unbeliever look different than that of a believer?