Forgiveness
Matthew 6:12, 14-15

Seeking and experience and forgiveness from our heavenly Father opens the door for deep fellowship, but withholding forgiveness from others disrupts our intimacy with both God and man. Receive forgiveness, learn to forgive and live in freedom!

Even in the best of relationships, communication breaks down. If the miscommunication, or misunderstanding, is serious, the relationship can’t move forward until it is fixed.

In our relationship with God, prayer, guided by the Word, is the way we communicate. But sometimes that communication becomes disrupted.

We have been talking about prayer. Specifically, the Lord’s prayer

- Began with this analogy: Born into this world not knowing how to communicate. Want to and need to but don’t know how. Imitation and instruction we learn and grow.
- Born into God’s family. Don’t know how to speak with God. Want to and need to.
- We must learn how to pray. “Teach us to pray”; modeled prayer; prayed with them
- Instructed them: Lord’s prayer, Disciples prayer, is a template to guide us toward deep, intimate communication with the Father
- DON’T pray like this – for show (motive); like the gentiles (theology)
- Instead, pray like this
  - Honor position – Father (intimacy, protection, provision); in heaven
  - Honor the Father’s priorities – His name, His kingdom
  - Honor the Father by asking

As we begin to make strides in learning to speak and listen to God, nothing messes up communication like unconfessed sin and unwillingness to forgive others. This morning: how to seek forgiveness, grant forgiveness, and restore intimacy with the Father.

READ Matt 6:5-12

In order to communicate intimately with our heavenly Father, we must...

I. Seek and receive forgiveness – Matt 6:12

What is sin? Never talk about it outside, but we talk about it a lot among our selves
- parabasis – to step across the line; trespassing. Don’t touch the stove
- paraptoma – a misstep. Unintentional, but still out of bounds.
- hamartia – most common; miss the mark; Homer spoke of the warrior Hamartei who hurled his spear but missed his foe.

Romans 3:23. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

Sin is any action, thought or motive that falls short of honoring God as He is, whether done knowingly or unknowingly.
Opheilema (ὀφείλημα) – Debts, obligations to God and others.

We can’t pay back the debt to God. Wages of sin (debt) is death

We need to be released from the debt

– aphemi – to dismiss, leave behind, abandon; disciples left their nets
– apoluo – to let go, send away or release

Forgiveness = to graciously, or freely, let go of an offense, refusing to demand retribution.

But if damage is done, it must be remedied. Debt still must be paid

– Col. 2:13-14; Gospel

We keep offending God, even after becoming His children

– Debt of all your sins Christ paid for at the cross
– That sin doesn’t remove us from relationship
– That sin inhibits intimacy of relationship

Solution?
• Confess. 1 John 1:9-10
  – If we refuse to acknowledge and confess sin, we suffer:
    ▪ With God – Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 66:18
    ▪ Within ourselves – Psalm 31:10 (cf. 32:3; 38:3b)
• Receive! Psalm 103:12
  – Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day!

II. Grant Forgiveness to others – Matthew 6:12, 14-15

• So I can’t have eternal life if I don’t forgive others? Lose it? Prove I don’t have it?
• Believe. Begin a relationship with God that will never end. Intimacy and enjoyment of that relationship depends on how I treat others
• Consequences in this life for not forgiving others
  – Unwillingness to forgive one person affects relationship with others. I am walking a pathway of bitterness that changes me.

  “Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back; in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you” (Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973]).

• Forgive by releasing the debt = release person from the debt owed to you

HOW?
1) Trust the God of justice. Turning over collection of the debt to God
  – 2 Tim 4:14
  – Entrust your souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right
2) Forgive, and forgive and forgive
   - Process not an event
   - ex - Corrie Ten Boom; Dutch woman. Family hid Jews during WWII. Trying to forgive a prison guard; like a bell tower; when you are hurt, the rope is pulled and the bell rings; as time goes on the bell keeps ringing even after you let the rope go; don’t grab the rope again
   - practice not rehearsing the wrong and debt I am owed and my retribution
   - ex - Clara Barton, founder of American Red Cross, reminded of a cruel thing done to her, appeared not to remember. “Don’t you remember it?” “I distinctly remember forgetting it.”

3) Forgive but also seek reconciliation
   - charizomai – to give or to give freely; related to “grace”
   - Reconciliation requires both parties to come together.
   - Best you can do sometimes is pray for the other person
   - May not be wise for you to trust. 2 Tim 4:14-15

4) Remember the debt you owed – Eph 4:32
   - Forgive because God has forgiven you
   - Other person may not even request deserve forgiveness

5) Forgive to make Jesus real
   - We make Him real and understandable
   - Forgiveness is what God loves to do. Father forgive them

6) Own any wrong you may have done
   - Matthew 5:23. Presenting your offering at altar

   **CONFESS:** Time for confession
   - Perhaps you need to just confess something to the Lord
   - Someone you need to confess to?
     - Our minds can come up with a thousand reasons not to confess, so just invite God’s Spirit to break through

   **RECEIVE:** Time to accept God’s forgiveness
   - Maybe you need to accept God’s forgiveness in Christ for the first time
   - Maybe you are a follower of Jesus, you have confessed, and you just need to believe that God has in fact forgiven you.

   **FORGIVE:** Time to offer forgiveness
   - Someone you need to release
   - In your heart; phone call; letter

   Let’s take a few moments and allow God’s Spirit to speak to each of us