

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Church is a Family that Forgives One Another

Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:8-13

Essential to a unified and harmonious local church body is a ready and willing spirit to quickly forgive each other. Our primary text today uses a word that is only found twice in the New Testament in the same form: *charidzomenoi* which means, in essence, to give freely, to show mercy or favor, to show grace. The other most common NT word is *aphes* which at its root mean to let go of a thing. As we study these passages, we will see how God intends us to function with one another and how it promotes both unity within the family and also personal, emotional and spiritual health.

I. Daily Fellowship and Conversation in the Church Family (The Context)

- A. Always pay attention to your mouth, there is never a time when we can be lax or careless in our speech with one another. (Eph 4:29)
- B. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit; the church becomes very dry and unproductive when the Holy Spirit is grieved and offended. (Eph 4:30)
- C. Guard your heart and refuse bitterness in all of its forms. (Eph 4:31)
- D. Be kind and forgiving...the way God has forgiven you! (Eph 4:32)

II. Understanding Forgiveness: What it Is, What it Does and Does Not Do

- A. It is both a command and a choice and is entirely within the realm of our own personal responsibility.
 - 1. It does not need to be requested to be given
 - 2. It does not need to be received to be effective
 - 3. It is rooted in God's gracious and complete forgiveness of us
 - 4. It is a choice of the heart to face the hurt that another person has caused you, in all of its depth and life altering ramifications, and to fully and freely release that person from the pain their action toward you has caused.
- B. What does forgiveness do?
 - 1. It restores you back to a right relationship with God
 - 2. It prevents you from developing bitterness which will poison you and damage everyone around you. ("The lack of forgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.")
 - 3. It sets you free from the bondage of an offense that has kept you in a prison of rage, anger, wrath, and malice...seeds of self-destruction.
- C. What forgiveness does not do:
 - 1. It does not bring reconciliation: genuine repentance that shows a comprehension of the hurt caused is required for reconciliation
 - 2. It does not satisfy restitution or restoration, which may be a needful component of repentance on behalf of another
 - 3. It does not remove the legal and societal obligations of the offense

CONC: Forgiveness maintains a right relationship between you and God and removes the emotional obstacles which obstruct healing and restoration of fellowship while preventing you from being destroyed by the damaging poison of bitterness.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for the need of the *moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:29-32

But no you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

A *renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, in all. So, as those who have been chosen by God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Colossians 3:8-13

