

## The Lord's Prayer: The Freedom of Forgiveness

### **INTRO:**

**-Say The Lord's prayer together.**

When you say the Lord's prayer (the Our Father) publically, after the issue with whether or not you say "For thine is the kingdom, the Power and the glory forever, amen" or not, the real that brings fear into everyone's heart, is the big issue of whether you say "Debts" or "Trespases."

The Lord's prayer is recorded in the Books of Matthew and Luke:

Matthew...the former Tax collector...whose entire life was formerly around finances, percentages, his cut the governors cut, used the word that is normally translated "Debt" meaning that which is legally owed, an obligation, a duty, something for which we have not yet made amends (for those with a 12 Step Background).

Luke...the Doctor uses a different word first...a word that is usually translated sins or trespases, that means failing to hit the mark, an offense, a violation...this can either be by what we do or by what we fail to do. He then returns and uses the same base word that Matthew does referring to those in debt toward us.

I think it was for poetic consistency that the Matthew passage was translated "Debts" and "debtors" and the Luke Passage was translated "trespases" and "those who trespass against us;"

Either way...the meaning and intent is the same...so if you say "Debts" and everyone else says "trespases"...I want you to know...your ok!

**Text:** Matthew 6:12 (NASB)

'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

When we have been wronged, hurt, betrayed, mis-used and offended, we typically look for a handle to get back control. We want to keep that person at a safe distance. We want to control them so that they don't hurt us again. And sometimes we want to get our hands on something that we can use as a weapon against them.

We want them to feel the pain we feel. We want them to learn their lesson. We want them to NEVER do that again!

So we look for an emotional handle to help protect ourselves and keep control of the situation. That emotional handle is called "Unforgiveness."

What we grab a hold of hoping it will be our handle of help ends up taking a hold of us, and actually becoming the thing that reinforces our chains of bondage!

## **Prayer**

### **I. Exodus Connection: The Year of Jubilee.**

A. Explain. Let me first look today at how Jesus' disciples would likely have understood this when they heard it. Because when it comes to "debts" and "debtors" there is a lot of Old Testament history there!

1. To Jewish audience in 1<sup>st</sup> century, they most likely would have made a direct connection: the Year of Jubilee. 50 year reset. All debts forgiven, and land returned to original families.
2. Leviticus 25
3. Economic system that would not exploit the poor.  
The rich don't keep getting richer at the expense of the poor.  
Land reverts to the original family with a few exceptions.  
Property values were to be based on the number of years of production until it would be returned to the original family.  
No interest charged on loans to their own people.  
The Israelites that fell into debt and slavery due to that debt, where released in the year of Jubilee!
4. Can you imagine a national economic system where the rich didn't keep getting richer at the expense of the poor? Where there would be no such things as families stuck in generational patterns of poverty?

5. Sadly, as far as I am aware, Israel has not once had an actual year of Jubilee!

B. Illustrate: What is one of the BIGGEST problems in our nation?

1. Debt.

a. National Debt \$16,733,161,000,000 (\$53,000 per citizen, and \$147,000 per tax payer) \*USDebtClock.org

b. Personal Debt

c. Credit card debt.

d. Personal Debt:

Current as of March 2013

**U.S. household consumer debt profile:**

- Average credit card debt for the US is \$7,122
- Average credit card debt among those who HAVE debt: **\$15,266**
- Average student loan debt: **\$32,559**
- Average mortgage debt: **\$149,667**

From nerdwallet.com

*So if you have credit cards, student loans and mortgage, and you are an average person in that state in the US, you owe \$197,492*

2. Did you know that our Declaration of Independence says: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.-” but it almost said, “and the right to own property.”

3. Can you imagine how our nation would be different if that was the case?

4. Instead, we get to “pursue happiness” which if you don’t know is like chasing a rainbow, but that is another sermon!

C. Apply:

1. Year of Jubilee never happened. The people of Israel never experienced more than one generation of the blessing that God desired to give them, because they didn’t obey God.

2. But glory be to God...that doesn’t stop God from fulfilling his plan! God will find a way!

3. Our national and personal debt is out of control in this country...that can not go on forever...we know that, but we keep living and acting like we will be extended infinite credit.

3. Do you understand that the debt we owe God for our rebellion against Him, our self-centered ways, is much, much greater debt than our national debt?
4. We like to live like we will never be called into account for that debt to God...but the scripture says that is NOT true!
5. The Good news is, God has made a way out for us! Because He loves us, and it's just too big a burden for us to carry! It just like God has prepared a "Year of Jubilee" for us!
3. In Luke 4 Jesus stands up in His home synagogue and reads from the book of Isaiah about this being the "year of God's favor." He said then that He was the fulfillment of that passage! He was declaring a "year" or better for our understanding, a "period" of God's favor that has NEVER existed before! A time of forgiveness, jubilee, restoration. That is the period we are living in right now...there is a special availability of God's grace and forgiveness that can be applied to our lives...let us not take it lightly.
4. Through Jesus' death and resurrection we now have God's Grace, forgiveness and life, in a way that has never happened before in the history of humanity! This is the year of the Lord! This is the period of Jubilee!
5. The question is...are you going to access the forgiveness of your greatest debts that is available right now? Or will you ignore it?

## **II. New Testament Connection: The Unforgiving Servant**

So that is just a quick "flash" of the impact of what Jesus was building on when He gave them this prayer. Let's now look at how Jesus refined, sharpened and focused that, and how he applied it to our lives: The disciples had some questions about forgiveness for Jesus...

### A. Explain. Matthew 18:21-35 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold<sup>[b]</sup> was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'<sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

<sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.<sup>28</sup> He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

<sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.'<sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'<sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

#### B. Illustrate:

1. Peter starts off, much like we do, asking "How forgiving do I have to be as one of your followers?" The tradition says 3 times for a good religious Godly person, I am one upping that and offering 7 times, because I am really spiritual! Is basically what was going on here!
2. Jesus returns it on Peter and says, you're missing the mark... The limit of forgiveness toward other people is not 3 times, like the tradition says, It's not 7 x 7 like the year of Jubilee! Jesus says we need to forgive 7 times seventy times! Does he mean to set the limit at 490 times and keep count? No. that's why he told the next story:
3. Tell story of the unforgiving servant.  
-20 years of day labors pay (\$20mil) vs. 1 days wages (\$150).

### C. Apply:

1. It's a clear picture of the disparity between our hugeness of debt to God because of our sin and the smallness of our debts to each other that we get so hung up on!
2. How long can you hold a grudge?
3. What does it take for you to write someone off and never talk to them again?
4. As big and hurtful as that offense was, it's like a \$150 compared to the \$20 million that you owe God because of your sin.
5. Let's be honest: Unforgiveness hurts you most and has little if ANY effect on the person you have not forgiven. But it may do a LOT of damage to the innocent people around you that you love. It poisons your life! It can create serious chronic health issues too!
6. It's just not worth hanging on to it! It doesn't do any good besides giving you a misguided sense of control!
7. Jesus forgave you your HUGE debt...shouldn't you forgive them for that small offense too?
8. Who are you having a difficult time forgiving? Write their name or initials down on a scrap of paper.

### III. Real Life Application: Unforgiveness Keeps You in Bondage!

**If you don't forgive, that area of unforgiveness is held away from God's grace. You are in effect binding sin to your life.**

#### A. Mark 11: 25-26 (NIV)

*<sup>25</sup> Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. <sup>26</sup> [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]*

- B. The part in brackets is in brackets, because even though it was in the manuscripts that were used to translate the King James Version of the Bible, this little section was NOT in manuscripts that were found LATER that were in fact OLDER. The question I want you to think about though is does verse 26 ADD anything that wasn't there? No. It just clarifies and restates what verse 25 said. So it doesn't mean that you can't trust your Bible! What it means is that our Bible translations have such integrity that when there are little issues like this, they let you know about it!

->Now that I have shared that with you, verse 25 is what I am going to focus on.

C. Here is what it means: God is not going to bring to the power of his forgiveness into our lives in any area where we refuse to give forgiveness.

1. Jesus' forgiveness is more than just erasing the debt, it is also giving us the power OVER sin...victory to live free!
2. You see, sinners sin. That's what they do. They can't help it. They are in bondage to sin. Followers of Christ...we sin because we CHOOSE TO! Jesus set us free, and we choose to jump back into the pit of filth because we like it!

D. Illustrate: Illustrate with yarn, scissors, a towel and 5 volunteers.

Teacher that called you stupid, a classmate that bullied you, insulted you and put you down for 3 years, a mother that left you, and a father that was an abusive alcoholic. You can forgive three. Then you wonder why you fall into alcoholism, or sometimes, there are people who don't even drink at all, but have all the characteristics of addictive behavior that destroys their family, employment, and relationships, plus they have pride and arrogance (self-righteousness) that they are NOT a drunk like their father, so this CAN NOT POSSIBLY be caused by their behavior!

D. Apply:

1. Let me make it real simple...what ever area of your life you do not have forgiveness in toward others, you are BLOCKING God's forgiveness and freedom in that area too!
2. You are bound, chained up, and controlled by sin in that area of your life. You do not have freedom there.
3. Do you really want that person who hurt you so long ago to have that much power in your life?
4. Don't you want to be free and experience God's full life?
5. If so, you need Jesus to help you to forgive that person that you have always considered to be unforgiveable!
6. Please understand, forgiving someone: doesn't mean:
  - a. Forgiveness does NOT mean what they did didn't happen.
  - b. Forgiveness does NOT mean that it's all ok.
  - c. Forgiveness does NOT mean that you can trust them.
  - d. Forgiveness does NOT mean that you have to be their friend now.
  - e. Forgiveness does NOT mean that they are sorry or even asked for forgiveness.
  - f. Forgiveness is NOT a feeling or warm fuzzy moment!

- g. Forgiveness DOES mean that you are releasing all judgments against them. You are no longer demanding revenge and repayment. You are leaving that in God's hands!
- h. Forgiveness means that you are releasing them of their debt to you!
- i. Forgiveness is a prayerful choice.
- j. You are free! (Cut the last string)

**Conclusion:**

You can't do that on your own! You NEED God's help.

His help to forgive is available! Just ask.

Ask and be free! Release the judgments. Release the bitterness. Release grudge.

You are not hurting the person that hurt you...you are only hurting yourself, your future, and the people that you love!

Stop it.

Give it all over to Jesus and be free!

I need the prayer team to the front right now.

If God is poking at your heart about some one, or some area of unforgiveness, I want to encourage you today, do not leave with out taking care of this with Jesus!

**This is what I am asking you to do this morning:**

1. You can find a place of prayer, and work through this forgiveness piece with Jesus or You can come to one of these members of the prayer team, and they can pray with you.
2. Then, before you leave today...I would like you to prayerfully, and solemnly bring that paper with a name on it...up here, and throw it away! You can crumple, shred it, what ever you need, but in your heart, when you put that name or situation in the trash can, you are releasing that person, that situation to God. You are choosing the freedom of forgiveness over the bondage that you have been living in!