

What is the condition for forgiveness of sins, according to verse 12? How can this change the way you pray?

What does our willingness or unwillingness to forgive reveal about our character? By refusing to forgive, what other sins might you be tempted to commit?

Why do you think God values forgiveness so highly?

NOW WHAT?

How should I apply it to my life?

Describe a time in your life when your awareness of/appreciation for the gospel compelled you to forgive someone.

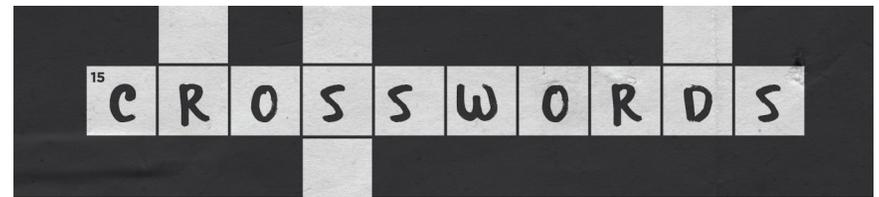
Have someone read Ephesians 1:4-8. What additional insight do these verses give us into forgiveness?

What are the benefits of relying on God's power when it comes to forgiving others and accepting His forgiveness?

Before we close in prayer, spend a moment thinking about who in your life needs your forgiveness, and who you need to ask for forgiveness. Ask someone else in our group to hold you accountable to pursuing forgiveness in those relationships this week.

PRAY

Thank God for the example of intercession and compassion that Jesus set for you, even as He died on the cross. Also thank Him for the unconditional love and grace He has shown to you by making you His own. Ask God to help you and your group members to commit to growing in ways that will enable them to model forgiveness to others.



BRAINERD BAPTIST CHURCH

INTERCEDING FOR YOUR ENEMIES

FEBRUARY 24, 2013

LUKE 23:32-37

SERMON NOTES

I. _____ Prophecy

II. _____ What He Preached

III. _____ to His Father

WALKING POINTS

WHAT?

What does the Bible say?

As Jesus trudged toward the site of crucifixion, two other victims accompanied Him (v. 32). Luke identified them as criminals—literally, “evildoers.” Luke didn’t name the nature of their crimes. Other Gospel writers used a different Greek term for these two that can mean either “robbers” or “revolutionaries” (see Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27). Appropriately, Jesus spent His last hours in the midst of sinners, the very people for whom He came to die.

The entourage proceeded to a place called The Skull (v. 33). At this spot they crucified Jesus. Luke provided few details of the elements of crucifixion. He preferred an emphasis on Jesus’ spiritual battle. During a typical crucifixion, death came slowly. The victim could live as long as two days. The soldiers suspended the victim from the cross using ropes and nails. Usually they stripped the person of clothing. Death came from exposure, blood loss, and dehydration. Crucifixion was a painful, humiliating death.

From the cross Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (v. 34). Jesus’ prayer probably was a reference to those present who were responsible for this event—soldiers and religious leaders. He held out hope for a spirit of repentance from them. They sinned out of ignorance. This emphasized the supernatural nature of a God who could forgive even the most heinous sin. According to custom, the soldiers divided His clothes and cast lots. They gambled away the last of Jesus’ possessions. This final insult pictures Jesus giving everything He had in death. Jesus demonstrated the ultimate in forgiveness.

Certain people stood watching as the scene unfolded (v. 35). A crucifixion often attracted curious onlookers. Luke offered no record of their thoughts at this point. The leaders, however, responded in character. They kept scoffing at Jesus. These religious leaders insisted on Jesus’ death and got it. But they kept on the attack even as Jesus died. The scoffing alluded to Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah. In His ministry, Jesus performed miracles that saved people from demons, illness, and death. In the view of the leaders, then, if He truly was God’s Messiah, the Chosen One, why did He not save Himself? They mocked what appeared to be true—the helplessness of Jesus. They looked for a Messiah who represented physical power. They failed to realize that they spoke the truth. He could have rescued Himself from the cross. He refused, however, to use His divine power for selfish reasons. Instead Jesus chose to obey God’s call to a different purpose—to give His life in sacrifice.

The mob mentality around the cross dominated (v. 36). Roman soldiers carried out the execution on behalf of the government. They too mocked Him. They of-

fered Jesus sour wine. This cheap drink possibly came as a kindness to the condemned. More likely, however, the soldiers scornfully gave a supposed drink of kings to Jesus, who came to be a King. The inscription tacked to the cross above Jesus possibly spurred their actions (see 23:38). Then the soldiers took up the taunt of the leaders, “If You are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (v. 37). As He did with the leaders, Jesus made no response to this abuse. He let His actions speak for themselves.

SO WHAT?

Why is this important to me?

Do you think forgiveness is easier to give or receive? Why? Why is forgiveness an important practice for the follower of Christ?

Why is it so hard for us to love our “enemies”?

Read Luke 6:27-31. What actions of an enemy are found in these verses? On the other hand, what are the commands for Christ-followers?

As followers of Jesus today, what do we communicate to the world when they see us loving unlovable people?

Read Luke 23:32-37. What was the focus of the taunts directed at Jesus by the leaders who wanted Him crucified?

Why do you think the people were saying these things? Why were they being so cruel to someone who had shown them such kindness through healing and teaching?

How do you typically respond, both internally and externally, when people make fun of you? What allowed Jesus to keep focused on the task at hand?

How do these verses impact your desire to put your faith in Christ?

Read Matthew 6:12,14-15. What did Jesus say should motivate us to forgive? Is that different from your common motivation to forgive? If so, how?