

Practicing Forgiveness

Description

Mark 11:20-26.

The petition in the Lord's prayer about forgiveness is conditional: "Forgive us our trespasses/debts/sins as we forgive those who trespass/sin against us or as we forgive our debtors." This petition was a new way of praying. Everything before that point is expected but forgiving others as we seek forgiveness from the Father: "That's a horse of a different color."

Again, John Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes*, says, "Forgive" And on this condition ye shall have whatever you ask without wrath or doubting. "If we don't or won't forgive others, we're short-circuiting our own forgiveness from God. It's the other side of the coin, or the balancing of the equation, to borrow from mathematics."

Our Christian spirituality, deeply rooted in tradition, inherits the Jewish understanding that true learning comes through practice and experience. Forgiveness is taught as it's caught. If we don't forgive others, faith is stunted and our growth in the Lord is hindered like an artery blocked by plaque—the flow is restricted. We don't forget the pain and hurt caused by others, but we can choose not to hold it against them. Then we can find release and experience the graceful flow of God's forgiveness.

*John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the New Testament: Matthew-Acts*, vol. 1 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1981).

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