

Forgiveness and Reconciliation - Ohana Abiding in Family Series **By Pastor Theresa Rosario (5/19/2024)**

Today we will be continuing in our new series Ohana: Abiding in Families. Last week we celebrated moms and graduates so beautifully as we learned from P Mark about true Agape love, what it is and where it comes from. So let me ask everyone, How are we doing with applying God's truth in our ohana? Easy to learn about, not as easy to live out. Amen?! But I want to urge you to continue to lean into God's presence. Abide in him and allow him to empower you with this desperately needed love in our world today.

P Mark shared a powerful story at the end of his message that exemplifies the agape love Christ demonstrated for us through the cross. And I was reminded—and we discussed in our small groups—that it is seemingly easy to love unconditionally when its your friends or family members. However, it gets more difficult when we have to love our enemies, or that sister in the church who has been talking smack about you. You know what I'm talking about.

And yet the Bible says we are to love, forgive, and to be reconciled. 1 John 4: 20-21 makes it very clear,

If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

How do we continue to walk in this kind of love when conflict is inevitable where there are people? In one word - Forgiveness. If flying is Superman's super power, Forgiveness is the believers Divine Power. It's a power that unfortunately is not exercised enough in this world.

The concept of forgiveness is equally as difficult to apply within our community context. And Ironically, you could not even be a Christian right

now without knowing about forgiveness and reconciliation, because Forgiveness is at the very heart of the gospel. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says,

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'

So we learned last week we are never more like Christ than when we are loving like Christ did. Well, guess what? We are never more like Christ than when we are releasing forgiveness and contending for reconciliation of those who are coming back to God! But this divine power is a gift that we are to exercise with one another as well.

Colossians 3:12-13 states,

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Matthew 6:14-15 says,

If you forgive those who sin against you, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others your Father will not forgive your sins.

Nothing more clearly how seriously God takes this concept of forgiveness than the parable of the Unforgiving Debtor (Matthew 18: 21-35):

Then Peter came to him and asked, 'Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins... Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. 'That's what my

Heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.'

Scripture has made a case for our need to release forgiveness. So what exactly is that?

Forgiveness is not condoning the behavior

Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened

Forgiveness is not restoring trust in the person

Forgiveness is not agreeing to reconcile (more on this later)

And according to one resource I found through the Gospel Coalition,

Forgiveness is not forbearance

Forbearance overlooks an unpleasant characteristic, event, or offense that is relatively minor even if our emotions feel major.

Proverbs 19:11 tells us, "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."

So its when we get irritated with our coworkers annoying habit, the friend who didn't wave at church, the spouse who leaves dishes in the sink. With God's help, forbearing people resolve their own inner discord quickly knowing that insisting on their rights or way may cause more wounds to oneself and others in the body of Christ. It's knowing and understanding everyone needs grace. Whereas, forgiveness applies to major offenses.

The definition of forgiveness is essentially the act of pardoning an offender. The Greek word translated forgiveness literally means to let go, as when a person does not demand payment for a debt.

The Bible teaches us that unselfish love is the foundation for true forgiveness, because "it keeps no record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Forgiving others means letting go of anger, or resentment, and giving up any claim to be compensated for the hurt or loss we have suffered.

When we don't release forgiveness and we hold onto our anger or resentment, it can quickly turn in to bitterness. As one sister in our ohana group said, bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. I've heard it is said like this, "Bitterness and resentment only hurt one person and its not the person we are resenting - it is us."

That's why the Bible exhorts us in Hebrews 12:14-15 (ESV),

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

Rick Warren in his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, explains that many people are reluctant to show mercy because they don't understand the difference between trust and forgiveness. Forgiving others is a decision and is immediate, whether or not a person asks for it or not. Trust, on the other hand, will likely take time to build or rebuild.

Rick Warren explains it like this,

"If someone hurts you repeatedly, you are commanded by God to forgive them instantly, but you are not expected to trust them immediately, and you are not expected to continue allowing them to hurt you."

Again, forgiveness isn't sweeping things under the rug and saying what the other person did or said was okay. It is also not necessarily forgetting what happened. Depending on the situation, it may require a time of healing. But I also believe God can give us a holy forgetfulness. Here are some scriptures that speak of how God himself chooses not to remember our sins no more:

- Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"
- Hebrews 10:17: "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more"
- Jeremiah 31:34: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"
- Isaiah 43:25: "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins"

Likewise when we walk in the power of Christ's gift of forgiveness it empowers us to not hold accounts of wrong doings, or in other words remember their sins no more. If you see a brother or sister who has wronged you and you feel a sense of yuk, then you probably are holding onto something forgiveness demands you to release. Or you keep filtering everything this person does through old reals, then have you really pardoned them and let it go?

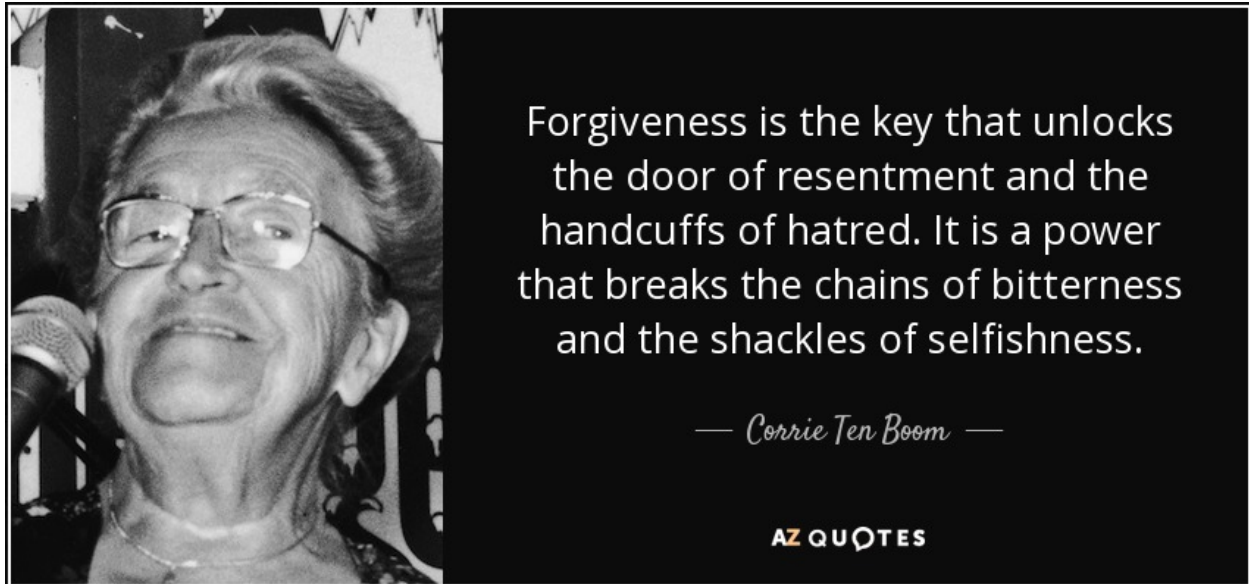
This goes against Jesus' command to forgive "seventy times seven" times. We must remember that God has forgiven us more times than we will ever have the opportunity to forgive someone else.

How then do we achieve this "letting go," which can feel like an impossible task? Even if we desire it; our emotions can rise up at the least expected time and overwhelm us with anger and pain.

In our own strength, forgiving others in the way we have received God's forgiveness is impossible. But again, this forgiveness is our divine power. Which means it comes from GOD through CHRIST. We simply must choose to exercise it. (ie. Walking everywhere instead of flying)

As we release unforgiveness and all the bitterness and anger that comes with it, we are freed to live and serve with real peace and joy and to grow in spiritual maturity. One sister in Christ told me its like being locked in a

dungeon but you are holding the key to unlock the door. You just need to use it. Corrie Ten Boom a Christian writer and public speaker, and who with her family members helped many Jewish people escape from the Nazis during the Holocaust.



Now, forgiveness does not mean reconciliation, but it can lead us there. Reconciliation involves a change in the relationship between God and man or man and man. It assumes there has been a breakdown in the relationship, but now there has been a change from a state of hostility and brokenness to one of harmony and fellowship.

In Romans 5:6-11, Paul says that before reconciliation we were powerless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God; we were under God's wrath (v. 9). Because of change or reconciliation we become new creatures. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The dictionary definition of Reconciliation is "the restoration of friendly relations." Again, forgiveness is not reconciliation but it can lead to restoring a friendly relationship. Please understand a friendly relation is not necessarily the same as a friend relationship. A friendly relationship is simply there is not hostility within the relationship any longer.

Testimony time (Personal Testimony, Lani Montayre, and Chris Massad)

More Bible Verses about Forgiveness to meditate on:

[Ephesians 4:32](#) - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

[1 John 1:9](#) - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[Luke 6:37](#) - "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

Ohana Group Questions:

1. How has the power of forgiveness transformed your relationship with God and with others?
2. Describe a time when you had difficulty releasing forgiveness towards someone? Where you finally able to forgive? How did that make you feel?
3. What does make allowance for one another's faults mean to you? Do you find this easy or challenging? Why?
4. Take time to ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart for any anger, resentment, or bitterness you are holding onto. Ask the Lord in prayer to help you release forgiveness.