

# SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 18.08.24

**PREACHER: PS ANDY MAC**

"THE FLOW OF FORGIVENESS -  
OFFENSE PART 3"

## BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

*BEING, THINKING & DOING*

**Conviction of a Disciple:** As we grow in our Christlikeness, we become increasingly less prone to take on offences, and more ready to step into God's flow of forgiveness - both in receiving and giving.

### OVERVIEW

Forgiveness sets us free from the destructive cycle of revenge and bitterness by allowing God's grace to flow through us, transforming us and those around us.

### ACTION

**Step 1:** Reflect: Where am I struggling with the desire for my ideas of justice and revenge instead of the way of forgiveness? How is it affecting me and those around me?

**Step 2:** Commit: Actively pray for those who have wronged you, seeking God's blessing for them instead of holding onto bitterness.

**Step 3:** Act: What practical steps can I take this week to make space to pray for and extend forgiveness to someone who has hurt me?

# THOUGHT

**SCRIPTURE:** MATTHEW 6:14-15; LUKE 6:27-38

It's no surprise when a new superhero movie comes out of Hollywood. No matter how many are made or how many we've seen, another one is just around the corner! One reason is that they satisfy a need we seem to have that longs to see the bad guy punished, the good guy win, and the city, world, or more recently the WHOLE UNIVERSE saved.

What's underneath this primal driver inside of us? Justice. We desire justice, and love seeing injustice dealt with (oftentimes the harsher the better). We aren't alone in this desire. In fact, it is connected to our Creator. God is a God of justice. However, the tricky part is that he asks that we leave the dealing out of justice to him. We're not thrilled with this, of course. Like Jonah, we too might lament God's kindness in dealing with our enemies, crying "See! I knew that you were gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending destruction. Now kill me Lord, for I'd rather die than live." (Jonah 4:2-4).

The reality is, while we may long for justice, what we often secretly hope for is revenge, or at least a bit of pain to be inflicted. Like just about everything, there are two cycles at work here: The world's way and God's way.

The world's way basks in woundedness and despises the person on the other side of the offence. It seeks revenge more than restitution. The dangerous thing about revenge is that it always ups the ante. Revenge says, "If you wound me, I'll destroy you". Sadly, this way of life isn't new. We see it through history and even through scripture. It's called the myth of redemptive violence, and when we look closely, one thing becomes clear: Hate only ever produces more hate.

In Exodus, we see God stepping into this cycle of violence and bringing it one tick closer to His character. In their context, it looked like a one-to-one response: "An eye for an eye." Of course, this was a massive improvement from Israel's violent neighbours. But God wasn't finished in revealing his character. (Isn't it amazing to think how patient our God is with us - meeting us where we are, in our time and place in history, and slowly, lovingly walking us home to his heart.)

Then Jesus steps onto the scene and shows what God's character is actually like. He reveals a culturally shocking, living, dynamic flow of grace and forgiveness offered to all no matter their past or circumstances. This Jesus Way says, "An eye for an eye? No way! More like turning the other cheek, and radical forgiveness - not once, twice, or three times, but 70x7!"

Then Jesus invites us into this flow of forgiveness. And the only way it gets clogged - the only weak link in the chain - is when forgiveness flows to us, but not through us. When we don't participate in this forgiving flow, Jesus says forgiveness no longer comes to us (Matthew 6:14-15). Why? Because when nothing is moving through us, it inhibits anything more flowing to us. This lack of flow stagnates into every area of our life. We can't compartmentalise the bitterness that comes from our offence and it ends up damaging those we are called to love and care for the most: primarily, our families.

So how do we enter this cycle and flow of God's forgiveness? Sometimes it means we need to go to the person we're upset with and work something out. But even more often, we pray for them, not for an act of justice but for God's richest blessing on their life. When we do this, we realise that forgiveness is setting someone free, and realising it was us all along.

## DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think it's so hard to let go of the desire for revenge and choose forgiveness instead?
2. How can we support each other in embracing the flow of forgiveness in our daily lives, especially in difficult situations?
3. What difference have you noticed in your relationships when you choose to forgive rather than hold onto offence?

## PRAYER

Lord,

Help us to embrace Your radical way of forgiveness. Help us to release our desire to take justice and revenge into our own hands. Allow Your grace to flow to us and through us, bringing healing and peace to our hearts and all of our relationships.

Amen.