

QUESTIONS ON FORGIVENESS



MATTHEW 5:23-24, ROMANS 12:18-19

1. Pastor Mark tells the story about a feud between two neighbors that began with a minor dispute over an empty Pepsi can. Can you recall a time when you (or someone you know) got into a major argument that began as a mild dispute over something trivial? What causes arguments to escalate?
2. When we are deeply hurt by someone, it is not possible to “forget.” But we can forgive. What is the difference between forgiving and forgetting? When we say “forgive and forget” what do we really mean?
3. It can become easier to forgive someone if he or she apologizes. But sometimes, perhaps many times, people will not apologize. Should we forgive anyway? Why or why not?
4. Pastor Mark says that “forgiveness is not letting someone off the hook for being a jerk, forgiveness is letting go of our hatred and bitterness so that we don’t become a jerk.” Do you agree or disagree, why or why not?
5. Sometimes in life we encounter a “repeat offender” who seems to have a pattern of hurting us. How can we forgive, but still set reasonable boundaries that protect us from abuse?

6. Read Romans 12:18-19. Pastor Mark suggests that we should forgive the “monsters” who do terrible things (Hitler, school shooters, terrorists), but that we should still hold them accountable to justice in this life while allowing God to take care of Eternal Justice. Do you think we should forgive those who do truly evil acts? Why or why not?

7. Sometimes we have to forgive God, not because God has done something wrong, but because we don’t understand why God has allowed something to happen. In this case, “letting go of our anger” requires us to trust in God’s wisdom and goodness even when we don’t understand. Can you recall a time when you had to forgive God in this way?

8. Pastor Mark suggests that a good way to tell if you’ve truly forgiven someone is if you can consistently wish that person well. What do you think it means to “wish someone well?”

9. Read Matthew 5:23-24. Why do you think Jesus connects our love for God with our willingness to seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness to others?

10. Why do you think the New Year is an important season to consider what it means to give and receive the gift of forgiveness?