**Part VIII: Forgiveness: Relational Significance**

Here is the last blog addressing the subject of forgiveness from God’s perspective, the forgiver’s perspective, and the forgivee’s perspective. Only the believer is able to view himself, others, and circumstances through the lens of biblical forgiveness because his God is the Forgiver, par excellence. Forgiveness originated in the mind of God and reaches His people via the cross and the resurrection.

Forgiveness highlights the relational emphasis given in Matt.22:37-40 and 1 John 4:7-12,19. God is love – He is the Lover. In response to being loved, the believer, who was formerly God’s enemy, loves others as a testimony to being loved. God is to be feared and loved because He forgives (Ps. 130:4; Luke 7:36-50).  The key is relationships. No un-reconciled relationship should exist between believers. As far as it depends on you believer, be at peace – no grudge holding (Rom. 12:18-19).

Reconciliation in the original language means a cessation of enmity and hostility and in its place friendship. The relationship in varying degrees is to thrive. Matthew 5:23-24 indicates the importance of this truth  Reconciliation trumps worship.

The following points should help you decide how you should proceed in terms of relationships especially among believers:

1. Matthew 18:15-18 addresses one aspect of being sinned against. If your brother sins against you and the sin can’t or should not be covered, the relationship is at stake and God's name is at stake. This decision is a wisdom issue. In general, the one sinned against must go to the other person. He knows he has been sinned against – or assumes he has. The one who goes to the other person is to bring the sin to light (what biblical principle is violated). The goal is for the person to “see” the sin as sin. The word for *confront* in Matthew 18:15 is a legal term. You go with the idea that sin is a real issue, the relationship is at stake, and sinners must be reconciled.

2. Luke 17:1-10 gives instruction on how to go. If your brother sins, rebuke him. The word for rebuke differs from that in Matthew 18:15. It carries more of a tentative aspect to it. It allows for and calls for data gathering. The desired effect is reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness. Simply on the basis of repentance the rebuker is to forgive. The passage teaches that this initial forgiveness is not based on the other person’s fruit (v.3-4), the forgiver’s faith (v.5-6), or feelings (v.7-10). God expects His people to be reconciled.

Remember believers are justified (records are clean – no guilt or condemnation) and forgiven. Therefore, they are to think properly about God, themselves, and others (Rom. 6:11). What wonderful words to hear and mediate upon: forgiven in Christ. Struck by who and what you are in Christ, you should be motivated to think and desire vertically and horizontally. When you do relationships will prosper and God’s name will be glorified (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-12).

**Application**:

1. Give special attention to your relationships starting at home and work outwards.

2. What are your conclusions?

3. How are you in the relationship area?

4. What do you need to change?

5. Using biblical principles begin to reconcile and improve each relationship one relationship at a time.