

The 4th Sunday after Epiphany ~ Sunday, January 31, 2016
“Winning the Game of Life ~ The Importance of Strategy”
Matthew 18:21-35

Strategy =

Stratego =

As important as strategy is in helping us achieve our goals, we need to recognize that strategies are _____ by nature—they’re all about _____.

2 EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL STRATEGIES

“Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night.” (Psalm 1:1)

“Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

GOD’S STRATEGY AND THE REAL GAME OF LIFE

When we’ve are wronged or hurt, our natural inclination often comes in two extremes:

- We are consumed with _____ and _____ and try to _____, make them pay, or demand _____.
- We _____ into ourselves, silently nursing our wounds and stewing in our pain

““You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?” ...So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” (Matthew 18:32-33)

Forgiveness isn’t something we can _____ for ourselves—God _____ gives it to us in Christ, so that we can _____ give it to others.

“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.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

We can often be like the unforgiving servant in the parable and want _____ and _____ for ourselves, and _____ and _____ for everyone else.

FORGIVENESS QUIZ

- #1. A person shouldn’t be forgiven until he asks for it. **T F**
- #2. Forgiveness includes minimizing the offense and the pain caused. **T F**
- #3. Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship. **T F**
- #4. You haven’t really forgiven until you’ve forgotten. **T F**
- #5. Forgiveness removes consequences. **T F**

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation...” (2 Corinthians 5:18)

FORGIVENESS IS NOT. . .

- Forgiveness is not: _____.
- Forgiveness is not: _____.
- Forgiveness is not: _____.

Reconciliation =
 Reconciliation requires:

- Forgiveness is not: _____.
- _____
- Forgiveness is not: _____.
- _____

TRUE FORGIVENESS INVOLVES . . .

#1. _____ **how much I have been** _____.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

The key here is _____. We are not forgiven because we _____ it or we’ve _____ it; we are not forgiven because we _____ never to sin again—we’re forgiven because we’ve put our _____ in Jesus.

However, you can't _____ what you don't have—if I don't feel _____, chances are, I won't be able to forgive anybody else.

“I tell you, her sins which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves, little.” (Luke 7:47)

We can't _____ others what we have so willingly _____ for ourselves.

“Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)

How much has God forgiven you?

#2. _____ up my _____ to get _____.

“Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, ‘I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

This goes against our _____ inclinations and what the _____ teaches.

- Justice is _____. Justice is getting what you _____.
- Forgiveness is _____. It is getting what you don't _____.

“Mercy triumphs over judgement.” (James 2:13)

Our God is a God of _____. When we give up our right to get even—when we extend grace and forgiveness—God will _____ the score—God will _____ all the wrongs.

Do you desire mercy for yourself and justice for others?

#3. _____ to _____ with _____.

Jesus calls us, not to respond in _____, but to come in the _____.

“Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27)

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:21)

When we come to the point when we can pray; “Lord, bless that person who hurt me,” then we'll know forgiveness is _____ in our heart.

It is only God's _____, flowing through us, that can _____ us to offer true forgiveness.

How often do you bless and pray for those who have hurt you?

#4. _____ the process as long as _____.

“Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.’” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Jesus' point is, we forgive as often as it _____—until we're able to _____; until the desire for _____ is gone.

Are you quick to forgive, yet still carried a grudge?

If we don't seek to forgive— if we don't seek to _____ our pain—we will _____ it everywhere we go.

“Give as freely as you have received.” (Matthew 10:8)

Do you have a forgiving heart?

Are you harbouring anger and bitterness because of the sins committed against you? Who do you need to forgive?

Ten Reasons Why We Don't Forgive

Jesus calls us to forgive as we have been forgiven. However, this is often easier said than done. The following are ten reasons that often keep us from forgiving. Can you relate to any of these? Have you ever struggled with any of these when it comes to forgiveness?

- Pride—forgiveness makes me look weak.
- I don't want to give up my excuse-making system (my coping mechanisms). When I don't forgive, I am in control. I remain able to manipulate others.
- I may get hurt again.
- If I ignore it, the problem will go away.
- Revenge—the other person has to pay for it. They need to learn a lesson.
- Failure to understand God's love and forgiveness for me.
- Failure to receive forgiveness myself—sometimes called “forgiving yourself.” Before I can truly forgive others, I must forgive myself.
- It seems too easy and unfair. It seems I'm overlooking or condoning their sin.
- I am waiting for the person to come to me first.
- I am waiting for a “feeling.”