New Apostolic Church **USA**

2025 SUMMER

VISION A NEWSLETTER FROM DISTRICT APOSTLE SCHNABEL

# The Ability to Forgive

## A BAROMETER OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH

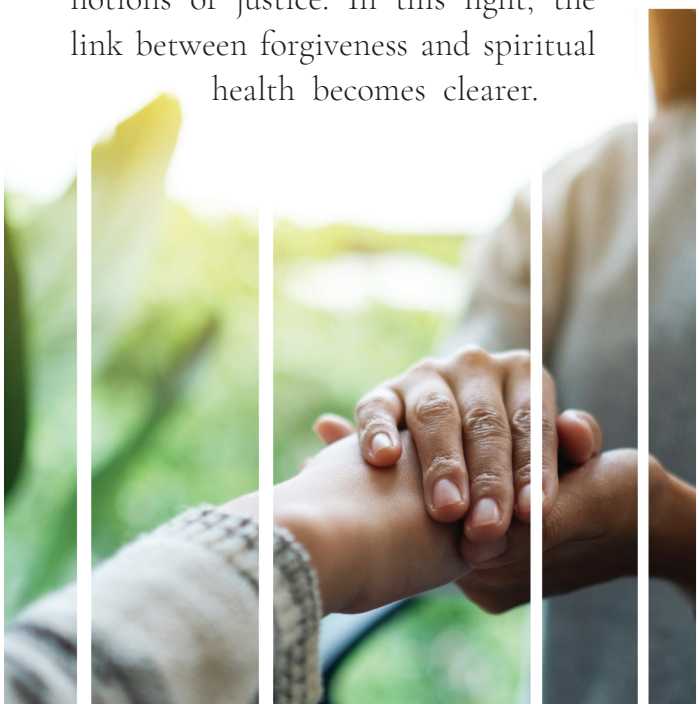
Forgiveness is a central theme in the teachings of Jesus, particularly highlighted in the parable found in Matthew 18:21-35:

> Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"
>
> Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.
>
> But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down [a]at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

This parable, which illustrates the importance of forgiving others, serves as a stark reminder of the magnitude of God's grace toward us. The story also includes some uncomfortable and challenging words, which we must take time to consider. However, closer examination reveals a more profound insight into the nature of our relationship with God. The essence of this parable is not about how forgiveness frees us from debt or helps us escape punishment, neither do we forgive to obtain a reward. It is about recognizing the grace we have already received and responding to it. It is out of the abundance of divine forgiveness we receive that we can forgive others. Therefore, forgiveness is not a transaction but a reflection of a heart transformed by God's love and mercy. The act of forgiveness is a result of grace, not an action to earn grace.

### The connection with Matthew 25

To further understand this dynamic, we can look to Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus speaks about the final judgment, separating the sheep from the goats. Here, the criteria for this separation hinge on our actions towards those in need. When the righteous ask, "When did we see you hungry or thirsty... and not minister to You?" the Lord responds, "I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me". This teaching (becoming Matthew 25ers) emphasizes that our treatment of others is a direct reflection of our relationship with Christ. The righteous served those around them so much that it became a part of their nature; they lived *in the mind of Christ.* Jesus' life and teachings exemplified the principles articulated in this parable, particularly in His response to injustice and suffering. One of the most profound instances of Jesus embodying the message of Matthew 25 occurred during His crucifixion, when He forgave His assailants, in the midst of intense suffering (Luke 23:34). This act of forgiveness encapsulated the core message of the parable: the radical love and grace that transcend human notions of justice. In this light, the link between forgiveness and spiritual health becomes clearer.



If we are to embody the mindset of Christ (Philippians 2:5), we must be willing to forgive. Our capacity to forgive demonstrates whether we have truly embraced the grace extended to us by God. When we withhold mercy from others, we reveal that our hearts may not fully understand or appreciate the enormity of the forgiveness we have received.

### The magnitude of God's forgiveness

To grasp the significance of God's forgiveness, consider the parable's depiction of the servant who owed an insurmountable debt—10,000 talents. The sum of taxes in Judea and five neighboring regions for a year did not amount to 1000 talents. This sum is so immense that it's hardly possible to make sense of it in the story. Yet, that is the point that Jesus is making. This astronomical sum underscores the vastness of God's grace towards us; it is boundless and without comprehension. In contemporary terms, this debt can be translated to approximately $6 billion, highlighting the incredible magnitude of what has been forgiven.

When we consider the depth of our own sins, it becomes evident that the grace we receive from God is far beyond our ability to repay. But how do we tally up the sin against us? The fellow servant owed 100 denarii, while the first servant owed 60,000,000 denarii (1 talent = 6,000 denarii). The grace and forgiveness that we are called on to extend is just a fraction of what we have received. Yet, God's grace does not erase our personal responsibility toward others, as stated in the Lord's Prayer: *"...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* The example of the 100 denarii shows that, even though minuscule compared to what was received, God understands that forgiving others is



not insignificant, it is not always easy, and requires effort. Forgiveness, therefore, is not just a duty but a response to the overwhelming love and mercy we have received. God's grace is unfathomable and unconditional, and while we cannot forgive in the same way, we should strive to imitate His capacity for forgiveness towards others.

### Our captivity to bitterness and grudges

The last two verses of the parable present harsh and challenging statements regarding punishment, prompting deeper reflection on the nature of forgiveness and its implications for our spiritual health - *"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."* At first glance, it may appear that the message is forgive or be damned. Yet we can understand these references to punishment and torture in a different light.

Despite understanding the importance of forgiveness, human nature often resists this call. A grudge is when we hold others to account, essentially putting ourselves in the seat of a judge. Holding onto grudges can feel more comfortable than letting go, and the pain of being wronged can create a cycle of bitterness and resentment. However, this reluctance to forgive only serves to imprison us in our own hurt. The metaphor of being punished for failing to forgive reflects the reality of emotional and spiritual bondage. However, we are allowing ourselves to be continually tortured by the pain others have caused us instead of letting go and freeing ourselves. This prison is locked from the inside and we could walk away from it if we chose to. When we refuse to forgive, we focus on our own suffering rather than the grace that has been offered to us, leading to a path of separation from God. Further, many individuals struggle with forgiving others, particularly within the context of the church. It is not uncommon for some to harbor grievances against the church due to past hurts or injustices. However, it is essential to remember that while the church has a responsibility to address conflict (as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17), the goal is not to ostracize individuals but to foster reconciliation, healing, and preserve the fellowship of believers.

Holding a grudge against the church or its members can hinder our relationship with God. It is vital to differentiate between the initial pain of being wronged and the prolonged suffering that comes from refusing to forgive. Healing takes time, but it is crucial to allow

ourselves to move past hurt and into a posture of grace. God does not actively punish us; instead, our choices to hold onto anger and resentment lead us away from His presence. The Chief Apostle's assertion that "God is a God of love and not a God of punishment" echoes this sentiment. We have the freedom to choose forgiveness, and in doing so, draw closer to Him.

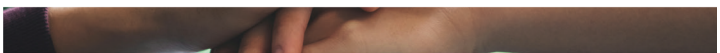
## Conclusion

Ultimately, the ability and desire to forgive serve as indicators of our spiritual health and maturity. They reveal whether we are oriented towards God's vast grace and mercy or if we are allowing bitterness to take root in our hearts. Forgiveness is not merely an act of obedience; it is a profound reflection of our understanding of the Gospel and of God's love. As we reflect on the lessons from Matthew 18 and 25, we are challenged to consider how our actions—specifically, our willingness to forgive—are connected to our faith in Christ. If we believe in His teachings and the salvation He offers, then we must strive to embody His grace in our relationships with others.

In the next part of this series, we will explore practical steps of reconciliation. We will delve into how we can cultivate a spirit of reconciliation in our lives, fostering healing not only within ourselves but also within our families, congregations, and communities. Forgiveness and reconciliation are steps in the journey of repentance, and understanding their significance is the first step towards a healthier, more vibrant spiritual life.

JOHN SCHNABEL





# SAVE THE DATE

*All are welcome!*

Whether you are in a small congregation, or a big congregation, whether you are near your community of faith, or have many miles to come to church, whether you've been a member of the church all of your life or you've recently decided to become a believer, know that you are a part of God's family... ***you belong***. As such, I am delighted to invite you to something revolutionary, a "family reunion..."

together

## June 26-28, 2026

**COLUMBUS, OHIO**

Hyatt Regency Columbus

This weekend is more than an event - it's a movement of unity, renewal, and purpose. Mark your calendars, invite your friends and family, and join us for this life-changing experience. We are stronger, *together*. We are one church, *together*!

**- DISTRICT APOSTLE SCHNABEL**