

SAS: FORGIVENESS (PART 2): Forgiving Others "Forgiveness" by Matthew West

Tonight, we're continuing our talk about forgiveness. Most people would agree that forgiving those who've wronged you, let you down, betrayed you, hurt you is perhaps the #1 hardest thing to do in life. We just sang the song *Forgiveness* by Matthew West. His lyrics say it: *It's the hardest thing to give away and the last thing on your mind today. It always goes to those who don't deserve. It's the opposite of how you feel. When the pain they caused is just too real. Takes everything you have just to say the word...forgiveness.* Forgiveness is often 180 degrees away from how we feel or think. We think more about revenge. These people did us wrong, they scarred us. No one wants to live in the pain of those past wrongs.

But forgiveness has incredible power. *It flies in the face of all your pride. It moves away the mad inside. It's always angers own worst enemy. Even when the jury and the judge say you gotta right to hold a grudge. It's the whisper in your ear saying 'Set It Free'.* This song from Matthew West isn't just a random thought that he wrote one day, there's a true & amazing story behind those lyrics. The song *Forgiveness* was directly inspired by the story of a mother named Renee Napier, whose 20-year-old daughter Meagan was killed by a drunk driver in FL on May 11, 2002. Meagan's friend, Lisa, was also killed in the accident. The man responsible for that accident was 24-yr-old Eric Smallridge, who was arrested for DUI, vehicular homicide & sentenced to 22 years in FL State Prison. God's forgiveness through Jesus' death & resurrection led Renee to forgive Eric. Eric in turn received tht forgiveness & became a Christian himself. Renee & her family lobbied the judge to cut Eric's sentence in half, which happened! Renee & Eric now tell this story of loss, forgiveness and healing to young people across Florida.

It'll clear the bitterness away. It can even set a prisoner free. There is no end to what its power can do. So, let it go and be amazed by what you see through eyes of grace. The prisoner that it really frees is you! Jesus came to release the captives & set the oppressed free (Lk 4:18-19). Jesus freed us from sin & thru His sacrifice, God forgives us. *For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins (Col 1:13-14).*

1.) We don't have to live under the chains & penalty of sin!

2.) We don't have to live with the anger & bitterness of unforgiveness!

~~~Fonda will now share her story of forgiveness.~~~

And we all know what Jesus said, "Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive those who've sinned against us." (So God, *Show me how to love the unlovable, Show me how to reach the unreachable. Help me now to do the impossible- Forgiveness.* Renee & Fonda have shown us, true forgiveness is possible through the power of God, through the blood shed by Jesus for us, thru His Holy Spirit & truth of His Word. Jesus' prayer on the cross is a good start, "Father, forgive these people. They don't know what they're doing!" (Lk 23:34a). Paul also gives us great advice in Colossians 3. *Put evil desires, anger, rage, bitterness, slander to death (Col 3:5, 8). Live your new life in Jesus: Clothe yourself in tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, peace & love. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others (Col 3:12-13).*

So when the forgiveness seems impossible, Jesus says "With God all things are possible," even forgiveness. Renee & Fonda's stories show us that through God, forgiveness brings great things: freedom, release of pain, even miraculous life-change. So tonight, what's holding you back? Do you want to remain captive to anger, bitterness & revenge? Or do you want to be set free from it? Jesus is ready, willing & able to set you free/ Trust in Him; let Him carry the burden. Let Him deal with the justice of the matter. You won't regret it.

### BIBLE VERSES

Lk 4:18-19 [Jesus said], "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come.

Col 1:13-14 For God has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins

Mt 19:26 Jesus looked at them intently & said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."

Lk 23:34a Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing."

Col 3:8, 12-13 (CEV) But now you must stop doing such things. You must quit being angry, hateful, and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel things about others. God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient. Put up with each other, and forgive anyone who does you wrong, just as Christ has forgiven you.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The song tonight said: "It's the hardest thing to give away and the last thing on your mind today." So why is forgiveness so hard?

2a. Read Lk 4:18-19. What did you think of Renee Napier's amazing story of forgiveness; could you forgive like she did?

2b. What might have happened if Renee hadn't forgiven Eric Smallridge?

3a. Read Col 1:13-14. The song *Forgiveness* says, "The prisoner that it really frees is you." Is this true? Why?

3b. How did God use forgiveness to set Fonda free? What about her story inspired or impress you?

4. Read Mt 19:26. Many believe forgiveness is foolish & impossible. Why is forgiveness possible through God alone?

5. Has God ever helped you to forgive someone? What happened? How were you changed by it for the better?

6. Read Lk 23-34a & Col 3:8, 12-13. God shows us how to forgive others. So do you want to forgive? What do you need to do in your life to extend that forgiveness to those who've wronged, hurt, or harmed you?

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Father God, thank You for forgiving us thru the sacrifice of Your One & Only Son Jesus Christ. Lord, help us to forgive others as You have forgiven us. Set us free from the chains of anger, bitterness & revenge. We trust You & in Your justice. We pray for those who are lost & who are still hurting others. Father, forgive them. Lead them to You & to your goodness. Amen.

*Forgiveness lyrics on back of this paper-*

*Forgiveness by Matthew West*

It's the hardest thing to give away  
And the last thing on your mind today  
It always goes to those who don't deserve

It's the opposite of how you feel  
When the pain they caused is just too real  
Takes everything you have just to say the word...

Forgiveness  
Forgiveness

It flies in the face of all your pride  
It moves away the mad inside  
It's always angers own worst enemy  
Even when the jury and the judge  
Say you gotta right to hold a grudge  
It's the whisper in your ear saying 'Set It Free'

Forgiveness, Forgiveness  
Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Show me how to love the unlovable  
Show me how to reach the unreachable  
Help me now to do the impossible

Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Help me now to do the impossible  
Forgiveness

It'll clear the bitterness away  
It can even set a prisoner free  
There is no end to what its power can do  
So, let it go and be amazed  
By what you see through eyes of grace  
The prisoner that it really frees is you

Forgiveness, Forgiveness  
Forgiveness, Forgiveness

Show me how to love the unlovable  
Show me how to reach the unreachable  
Help me now to do the impossible  
Forgiveness

I want finally set it free  
So show me how to see what Your mercy sees  
Help me now to give what You gave to me  
Forgiveness, Forgiveness