

## Podcast Episode 106: Forgiving Others

Today, Denver and Stephanie discuss the mandatory condition that we forgive others in order to obtain forgiveness ourselves.

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STEPHANIE: When I read an article or hear a news story about some tremendous act of forgiveness, on the part of someone who has given absolution to another person for some grievous offense, I think, “So *what?!?*” The dad who forgives the drunk driver who killed his entire family; the woman who forgives the man who raped her; the elderly man who doesn't hold a grudge against the businessman who conned him and stole all his money—so what?!

We treat these instances as though they are great acts of emotional heroism. We heap praise and adulation upon the people who are so magnanimous that they forgave the horrible bastard who grieved or assaulted or offended them. It's ridiculous! We *lie* to ourselves when and if we think we are *ever* justified in resentment, grudges, judgments, or accusations. *We are not—ever.*

The Lord's standard is pretty clear, and there's not much wiggle room. You want Heavenly Father to forgive *you*? You forgive each other. That sounds like a really good way of *loving yourself*. Forgiveness is a requirement—it is a condition—and the Lord has this to say about it—3 Nephi 5:34:

*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors....For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if [you] forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (3 Nephi 5:34 RE; see also 3 Nephi 13:11, 14-15)*

Colossians 1:13:

*Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies, kindness, humility of mind, meekness, long-suffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do you; and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness...Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (Colossians 1:13 RE; see also Colossians 3:12-14, 16-17)*

*This sounds like loving yourself. Teachings and Commandments section 157:58:*

*I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses....If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. (T&C 157:58 RE)*

Just as a side note, I'm pretty sure Nephi did not love his brothers, 'kay? I just don't think he did. They were abusive; they were violent; and they were fratricidal, okay? But, this is what he does—Nephi 2:4:

*And it came to pass that when I, Nephi, had spoken these words unto my brethren, they were angry with me. [Yes, so what's new? They were always angry with him.] But it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, according to **my** faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren?...And it came to pass that when I said these words, behold, the bands were loosed from off my hands and feet, and I stood before my brethren and I spake unto them again...And it came to pass that I did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness...And after they had done praying unto the Lord, we did again travel on our journey towards the tent of our father. ([Emphasis added.] 1 Nephi 2:4 RE; see also 1 Nephi 7:16-18, 21)*

Genesis 11:4-9— Again, another story of fratricide, 'kay? Pretty sure Joseph didn't love his brothers, and his brothers certainly didn't love him, because—Genesis 11:4-9:

*And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, What do you seek? And he said, I seek my [brothers]; tell me, I pray you, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed from here, for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren and found them...*

*[And when he comes, they see him]...and they [conspire] against to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this **dreamer** comes. [They don't even call him by name, okay? They have so much contempt for Joseph that they just call him “the dreamer.”] Come now therefore and let us slay him and cast him into [the] pit, and we will say some evil beast has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams.*

*And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands and said, [Let's] not kill him. And Reuben said...Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit...[That's great—we'll just cast him in this pit. Verse 7:]*

*And it came to pass when Joseph had come unto his brethren...they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him...they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty, [and] there was no water...*

*And they sat down to eat... [And lo and behold, they see] a company of Ishmaelites [coming] from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said...[Hey,] What profit [it is] if we slay...and*

*conceal his blood? Come...let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh. [Well, that's nice. We don't hate him enough to kill him, but we just sell him to this band of Ishmaelites.] And his brethren were content.*

[So, they sell him for 20 pieces of silver. Reuben went back to the pit; Joseph wasn't in it.] *He rent his clothes. And he returned to his brethren and said, The child is not; and I, where shall I go? And they took Joseph's coat...killed a...[goat]...dipped the coat in blood. And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father and they said, ["Oh, oh, oh, it's so terrible!"]* ([Emphasis added.] Genesis 11:4-9 RE; see also Genesis 37:15-32)

Okay, so you know the story. Lots of stuff happens, and then this—Genesis 11:39 and 40:

*Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me! And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph. Does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. [Because, yeah, "What happened to you?"] And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me here, for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years has the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve [your] posterity [and] the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God. And he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and [a] lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the [lands] of Egypt. [And more happens, and more happens.]*

*And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept. And Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brethren and [he] wept upon them. And after that, his brethren talked with him. [Wow!] (Genesis 11:39-40 RE; see also Genesis 45:1-15)*

The foregoing scriptures illustrate that forgiveness, intercession, and relationships *do not* have to be based on love, as we culturally define it here.

DENVER: Everything Christ taught is tended to change our inner self. He did not want me judging and condemning you. If you decide to abuse me, Christ teaches I should forgive you. If you offend me seventy times seven, Christ taught me to forgive. If we believed in Christ enough to live as He taught, our families would heal, our communities would heal, our nations would heal, and the world would heal. Christ was an idealist, but He showed by His life that it is possible to live the ideal. As a Christian I should commit to that ideal, and at every missed step resolve to do better. Each of us control only our own life, but your example is enough to change the lives of many others.

In His kindness and mercy, Christ revealed yet more of His suffering in His atoning sacrifice in February of 2005, and December of 2007. *Again*, He provided us with a description of what happened in Gethsemane:

*The **greater difficulty** in these paired waves of torment was **always** overcoming the suffering of the **victim**. With these waves the Lord learned to overcome the **victims'** resentments, to forgive, and to heal both body and spirit. This was **more** difficult than overcoming the struggles arising from the one who **committed** the evil. This is because the one doing evil knows he has done wrong and feels a natural regret when he sees himself aright. The victim, however, always feels it is their right to hold resentment, to judge their persecutor, and to withhold peace and love from their fellow man. The Lord was required to overcome **both** so that He could succor both.*

*In the pairing of the waves, the first torment was of the mind and spirit, and the second was torment of mind, spirit, and body.*

*The Lord experienced all the horror and regret wicked men feel for their crimes when they finally see the truth. He experienced the suffering of their **victims** whose righteous anger and natural resentment and disappointment **must also be shed**, and forgiveness given, in order for them to find peace. He overcame them all. He descended below them all. He comprehends it all. ([Emphasis added.] T&C 161:19-21)*

D&C 1, verse 31. Oh, here the Lord says it right to us, again, right now, in this dispensation. D&C section 1, verse 31: *For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance* (D&C 1:31; see also T&C 54:5 RE). So, contrast that with, "I cannot look at myself without the *enormous* latitude of allowance because I'm very forgiving of myself." You would be better off saying, "I will recognize, I will admit, and I will hold myself to *every failing* that I am prone to make. But as for all the rest of you, I don't see anything wrong with any of you. I can't detect a flaw in the least, because I'm going to judge you by the standard with which I would like to be measured; which is, I take no offense, I freely forgive."

There's an expression— It's found in places some of you would find dubious, but there's an expression about how some people do not "taste death." The statement that they do not taste death doesn't mean they don't die. It just means that their death is sweet because they die in companionship with those on the other side who bring them through that veil of death in a joyful experience.

There are a handful of people who have reported that, as they were dying, angels came and ministered to them. I think *all* authentic Christians, in *any* age, belonging to *any* denomination—I don't care what the denomination is—I think *all authentic Christians* who depart this world find that death is sweet to them and that they are in the company of angels as they leave this world. And I don't think it matters that the *brand* that you swore allegiance to—and you contributed your resources to support— matter anywhere near as much as whether you believe in Christ, whether you accept the notions that He advances

about the Sermon on the Mount, and whether you try to incorporate and live them in your life.

Jesus took the Law of Moses as ‘the standard.’ What the Sermon on the Mount does is say, “Here is the standard, but your conduct should not be merely *this*.” “Thou shalt not kill’ is not enough—you must avoid being angry with your brother; you must forgive those who offend you; you must pray for those who spitefully use you. Just refraining from murdering one another, with a reluctant heart, bearing malice at them—“Well, I didn’t kill the guy, but I got even!”—that’s not enough! That’s *not* the standard that Christ is advancing. ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ is not good enough—don’t look upon a woman to lust after her in your heart.

Jesus is saying, “Here’s the law—and you can do all of those things and be malevolent; you can be angry; you can be bitter; you can be contemptible; you can hold each other out as objects of ridicule—its purpose is to make you something more lovely, more wonderful, more kindly, more Christian.” Christ says to be like Him. The Sermon on the Mount is an explanation of what it’s like to be like Him.

Perhaps the Book of Mormon contains one account to give *us* hope. Following conversion, one group of Lamanites were led by a king who encouraged them to lay down their unbloodied weapons rather than *ever* shed blood again. This meant they could not defend themselves. After their king finished his proposal, this took place:

*And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings...all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man’s blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth.*

*And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man’s blood; and this they did vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives; and rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him; and rather than spend their days in idleness they would labor abundantly with their hands.*

*And thus we see that, when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know the truth, [that] they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin; and thus we see that they buried the weapons of peace, or they buried [their] weapons of war, for peace. (Alma 24:17-19; see also Alma 14:9 RE)*

When their resolve was tested, they passed. Rather than take up arms they laid down their lives:

*Now when the people saw that they were coming against them they went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves before them to the earth, and began to call on the name of the Lord; and thus they were in [the] attitude when the Lamanites began to fall upon them, and began to slay them with the sword.*

*...Thus without meeting any resistance, they did slay a thousand and five of them; and we know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God.  
Now when the Lamanites saw that their brethren would not flee from the sword, neither would they turn aside to the right...or...the left, but that they would lie down and perish, and praised God even in the very act of perishing under the sword—  
Now when the Lamanites saw this they did forbear from slaying them; and there were many whose hearts had swollen in them for those of their brethren who had fallen under the sword, for they repented of the thing which they had done.  
And it came to pass that **they** threw down **their** weapons of war, and they would not take them again, for they were **stung** for the murders which they had committed; and they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies of those whose arms were lifted [up] to slay them.  
And it came to pass that the people of God were joined **that** day by **more** than the number who had been slain. ([Emphasis added.] Alma 24:21-26; see also Alma 14:10-12 RE)*

This event is astonishing, and many have been shocked by the extreme behavior of these believers. *We* are not being asked to lay down our weapons and be killed. *We* are only being asked to lay down our hostility, slander, and abuse of one another to become peaceful and loving. This is a good thing that benefits everybody. Despite this, we keep our pride, ambition, jealousy, envy, strife, and lusts. These destructive desires are *preferred* over forgiving offenses in meekness, love, and kindness.

None of us are asked to die for a covenant, but are only asked to be more like Christ and forgive and love one another. This seems so difficult a challenge that we quarrel and dispute among ourselves. We remain haughty and self-righteous, and fail to realize self-righteousness is a lie, a mirage, utterly untrue. We must trade our pride for humility, or we will never be able to keep the covenant. Remember, it is a group who must keep the covenant, not individuals. Together we must act consistent with the obligation *we agreed* to perform before God.

Once you begin to repent, the real work commences. God forgives; but retaining forgiveness requires that we follow Him. We're not going to develop into His children until we have become acquainted with His way. He tells us what we must do to learn of Him. We must do His work—join in His labor—to save souls:

*And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.  
For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.  
And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.  
And if ye lend to them...whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*

*But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the [un]thankful and [unto] the evil.*

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:*

*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give [unto] your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:31-38; see also Luke 5:11 RE).*

Once again, we forgive. We take on ourselves the role of the intercessor by accepting the shame and abuse of this world, and both forgive and pray for those who give offenses. Through this, we come to *understand* our Lord because we are like Him.

This is what we see in Lehi. After learning of God's impending judgments against Jerusalem, he prayed on behalf of "his people" (those who were condemned) "with all his heart" (See 1 Nephi 1:5; see also 1 Nephi 1:3 RE). His example can be found mirrored in all who repent. They display His grace by what they suffer for His cause.

Christ taught who He was, then lived the example of what a redeemed life would look like. He sacrificed Himself. Similarly, His followers sacrifice themselves. Perhaps not by dying as He did, and as Joseph did, and as Steven did, and Paul, and Peter, and Abinadi, and Hyrum, but by the *way they live*—taking offenses and forgiving. This is how we obtain broken hearts and contrite spirits, because this world is always at war with the Saints of God. Here the Children of God are strangers and sojourners—unwelcomed, unappreciated, often the source of contempt, ridicule, and judgment. Let them judge, but don't judge them in return. Return kindness for evil.

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matthew 6:14-15; see also Matthew 3:30 RE).* This is an absolute condition. It is mandatory. If you *forgive not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you *your* trespass. You *can't* be forgiven by the Father if you do not forgive others. It can't be done. That grudge you harbor prevents the Father from forgiving you. Those resentments you think are justified are keeping you from being forgiven by the Father. Those injustices imposed upon you by others, who are unthinking or cruel, *must be surrendered*.

The early Saints were victimized by mobs in Missouri and Illinois. They wanted revenge. Brigham Young implemented a covenant to seek vengeance upon the murderers of Joseph Smith until the third and fourth generation. *They* did not build Zion. They wanted vengeance more than they wanted anything else.

The opposite of this is forgiveness. If you forgive, your Heavenly Father WILL forgive you. Offenses are opportunities for you to gain forgiveness. All you need do is forgive them. It is

a simple, direct, cause and effect. It was ordained before the world was founded, and applies universally in all ages and among all people. *It lightens the burden.* This is why Christ said His yoke was easy and His burden is light. Because when you lay down all of the offenses that have aggregated over your lifetime against you, you find yourself free indeed.

The world is in Satan's grip, largely because the world seeks vengeance and refuses to forgive. Zion, on the other hand, will be filled with those who forgive. Of course that puts an absolute limit on those who can dwell there, and therefore, will include very few indeed.

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Stephanie Snuffer's remarks entitled "Love Others As Yourself," given at a regional conference in Sandy, Utah, on July 14, 2019;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 16, 2017;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6, entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, Colorado, on April 12th, 2014;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #8, given in Montgomery, Alabama, on May 18, 2019;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Civilization," given in Grand Junction, Colorado, on April 21, 2019;
- Denver's blog entry entitled [Forgiving to be Forgiven](#), posted August 3, 2012, and subsequently recorded with additional commentary on February 22, 2020; and
- Denver's blog entry entitled [3 Nephi 13:14-15](#), posted October 21, 2010, and subsequently recorded with additional commentary on February 22, 2020.