

Matthew 18:21-22

Repeated Forgiveness

How often... shall I forgive?

- **Note the irony of the question coming from Peter.**
How many times has Peter offended Jesus, or in some way opposed his mission? How many more times will he betray Jesus before the end of his life?
- I hear in Peter's words a sort of contrition, a hopefulness that the answer he provides is true. Forgive 7 times!
Seven is a symbolic number meaning perfection. Forgive the perfect number of times until the offender is perfectly forgiven.
- Peter is hoping for his own sake that this is true.

How often... shall I forgive?

- **Jesus' answer does not contradict Peter, but amplifies it.**

Therefore, seventy seven or seventy times seven means that we must be willing to forgive others without limit.

How often... shall I forgive?

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“Forgiveness is always available to anyone who has contrition for his or her sins along with purpose of amendment, i.e. the intention not to commit sin in the future. The forgiveness of our personal sin is also contingent on our willingness to forgive those who may have offended us. The example of Christ and the virtue of charity demand that we forgive those who have offended us, neglected us or caused us injustice. *Seventy times seven* In scripture seven means totality and completeness.

Matthew 18:23-35

The Parable of the unmerciful
servant

So also my heavenly Father will do to you...

This parable exemplifies the forgiveness Jesus spoke of in the preceding verses.

1. Our forgiveness of others opens the way for a great showering of grace.
2. The emphasis is on the great debt of sin which is the offense against God, and the great forgiveness which Christ is bringing to the world.
3. Forgiveness is always available and yet contingent. It is free, as it must be, since we can not pay its debt. Yet it requires a duty, the duty to be as forgiving as forgiven.

So also my heavenly Father will do to you...

Those who know God's mercy must operate on the principle of mercy. If they do not show mercy but insist on justice, they will not receive mercy, but justice. An unforgiving heart is an unforgiven heart and is subject to torment "until he should pay all" (v. 34; 6:12 note). A truly forgiving heart is one result of spiritual rebirth (John 3:3).

So also my heavenly Father will do to
you...

We are never less like God than when we withhold forgiveness
to those who are penitent.

We are never more like God than when we forgive
completely and without reservation those who
are penitent.

From the sayings of Fr. Brad