

Forgiveness

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[0:00] Well, good morning. While they're getting the screen ready, my name is Matt Jones. I am the son of Ivan and Jan Jones.

and it is an honor and a privilege for me to be here with you all this morning at Abotrace. I'm here this weekend with my dad and mom, and we spent some time with my brothers, and we got together this weekend.

And so I'm super excited to be here, be back amongst you guys. It was about a year ago that I was here, or February. I think it was February, close to that. So thank you for this honor and privilege of getting to share about something that I think is very, very important to the Christian faith.

And so before I get into that, I want to tell you a quick story. Oh, there we go. I want to tell you a quick story. My son, he has a great imagination, and he's going to come back up at the end of our time together this morning.

And I'm more of a teacher than a preacher, and so I like having my tech in the background. But my son was at the King Soopers grocery store, and when he was about three or four years old, he has a great imagination, and he's there with his mom and sisters.

[1:12] I was out of town, and my wife was telling me this story. And my wife needed to take his sisters to the restroom, and she didn't want to leave them outside the bathroom door at the grocery store.

And this is King Soopers. In Colorado, Kroger is King Soopers, and in Tennessee, well, in Colorado, King Soopers is Kroger. And so he goes into the restroom with his mom and his two sisters.

And the sisters there were there for a little bit longer than normal. And he gets restless, and so he goes over to the paper towel dispenser and hits the paper towel dispenser a bunch of times, rips it off, and then he grabs it and he rolls it up like a scroll.

And then at the top of his lungs in this public restroom, he opens the paper towels like a scroll and says, I have a message from God. He goes, everybody sins, somebody's got to die on a cross, and everybody should shop at Kroger.

So I thought, you know, not bad theology for a three- and four-year-old. And I'm going to come back to my son here at the end this morning. But I just want to hopefully say that hopefully God has something for you today because this is a topic that we're going to talk about today that I think is extremely significant, not only for the success of a family and the growth of a family, but also the growth of the church, and I would argue even the kingdom of God.

[2:38] So before we talk about God and his word, let's take a minute and talk with him in hopes to hear from him. Father, we thank you so much for the honor and privilege of getting to be here amongst a group of people who love you and, according to my mom and dad, love one another in a way that brings glory and honor to you.

And I pray, Lord, that we'll think about times and ways of how to handle it when we do fall short and lie to her in spite of me. I thank you for the opportunity to open your word and talk about this topic that really should help us bridge the gap whenever relationships are broken.

Thank you for this opportunity in the precious and holy and righteous and mighty name of Jesus. All God's people said, amen. So the topic, maybe you've already picked up on it, it is forgiveness.

And it's interesting, I've been doing a lot of research on forgiveness, and I don't know how many of you all know this, but John Hopkins Medicine put this out a few years ago. It says, the good news regarding forgiveness.

Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack, improving cholesterol levels, and sleep, and reducing pain, blood pressure, and

levels of anxiety, depression, and stress.

[3:58] And as we know, anxiety and depression have increased immensely, really since about 2014. And one of those reasons is this phone. But when it comes to this particular topic, when it comes to forgiveness, research points to an increase in the forgiveness health connection as you age.

And I find that interesting because the older you get, more time you have, and access to people. But I also find this interesting in terms of the importance of forgiveness. I'm a huge fan of the thinking that we're creating the image of God, and we get to reflect God's character and his priorities.

And if God is a forgiving God, it would only make sense that if we're living in light of being an image bearer and demonstrating forgiveness, then it would be an actual physical benefit to us.

And so some of you may be saying, well, wait a minute, what's forgiveness? If you have not studied forgiveness, if you've got folks in your life who you would like to forgive or need you to forgive them, I would encourage you to read Tim Keller's book called *Forgive*.

And here's how he defines it. I'm a big Tim Keller fan. *Forgive*. Why should I and how can I? And he really gives some great insight here. He says, to forgive is to release the wrongdoer from liability by absorbing the debt yourself.

[5:17] Forgiveness is to release the wrongdoer from liability by absorbing the debt yourself. This liability language means the responsibility to pay or give something of value to another party.

Folks, whenever we forgive, and I think sometimes we're reluctant to forgive because forgiveness costs us something. It costs us something. And to forgive is to release that wrongdoer from liability by absorbing the debt yourself.

And I don't know about you, but can you think of somebody whom you would like to forgive you? I've got some folks in my life that I would like, man, there would be just great blessing if that person would forgive me.

Or here's an even tougher question. Because if you can think of people that you would like to forgive you, then maybe the tougher question is, whom might you need to forgive?

Because we're called to treat others how we want to be treated. And if we want to treat others how we want to be treated, and we want to be forgiven by some people, maybe, just maybe, we get to forgive other people.

[6:27] So here's what we're going to talk about. We're talking about four things this morning. First of all, the importance of forgiveness. We've already demonstrated that it could be good for your physical health. Clearly, it would be helpful in your mental health.

And it would also be good for your relational health. Second of all, we're going to look at an example of forgiveness. Number three, we're going to look at how do we know we are forgiving? I talk on this a lot.

I'm a teacher, a professor at Colorado Christian University, and I talk about this a lot. And I have a lot of people that come up to me afterwards. A lot of students say, Dr. Jones, I know it's important to forgive, especially in light of what we've talked about.

How do I know I'm forgiving somebody? And how does that person know you've forgiven them? Beyond just, I forgive you.

Is there something more to expressing forgiveness? Because we're going to be more about not just forgiving, but restoring broken relationship. And we'll talk about. And then last but not least, I want to challenge you, or at least hopefully the Holy Spirit will challenge you to forgive, and we'll think about that.

[7:31] So, I am of the strong, strong conviction, in light of Scripture, because it's true, in light of this medical evidence, because there's good evidence for it, that a key to experiencing life is forgiveness.

If you and I want to experience life, we need to be people who forgive. John 10:10 says, I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly. In fact, John 20:31 says, that John wrote his gospel so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you can have life in his name.

And that have there is in the present active form. We can actually experience life here and now. And I don't know about you, but for me, there have been times in my life where I've lacked experience in the life that God has for me because of my lack of forgiveness or people's

unwillingness to forgive me.

And if you're married, this is pretty important. It's pretty important. So, Jesus is going to talk about this here.

Here in the Sermon on the Mount, if you want to turn with your Bibles, they will be up on the screen, but reading out of the NASB this morning, just to give a little bit of context, Matthew is recording Jesus' sermon with the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6.14 and 15, and it's right come after the Lord's Prayer, which you're probably familiar with that, when it says, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name or your name.

[8:59] Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. And then, right after that, he says the following, For if you forgive other people their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses. Now, that's a pretty shocking statement coming from Jesus. And it seems that, initially when you read that, you go, Okay, well then, is God's forgiveness of me contingent upon my forgiveness of others?

And I'm not 100% convinced that that's what Jesus is communicating here because we know that we're saved by grace, through faith, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

However, he may be saying something pretty significant when it comes to the significance of forgiveness by saying, Maybe, just maybe, if you or I have an unforgiving heart, then maybe we don't know how much God has forgiven us.

[10:12] You guys remember from Luke 7, whenever the lady comes in and washes Jesus' feet and she's in tears, and the religious leader says, How can Jesus let this woman touch him?

And Jesus says, He who loves little has been forgiven little. I think there's a huge connection between understanding God's love and forgiveness of me in hopes that I will be loving and forgiving of others.

Now, that doesn't mean that there's not consequences, there's not responsibility if there is forgiveness, but when it comes to this, Jesus has elevated the significance of forgiveness to say, Listen, this is so important.

If you don't forgive other people, then the Father will not forgive you. And I'm like, Okay, that is extremely important in terms of how God wants to work.

And folks, the gospel, part of the gospel message is that God wants to restore relationship. A lot of folks say, you know, the gospel is about restoring relationship between God and humankind.

[11:17] That is an important part of it. But also, the gospel is about restoring not just the relationship between God and humankind, but humankind with others, humankind with itself, how you see yourself, because we're called to love our neighbors as ourselves, and then take care of God's good creation.

Folks, if you understand forgiveness, then you are in the process of being a part of restoring relationship because to forgive is to release the wrongdoer from liability by absorbing the debt yourself.

C.S. Lewis says it. I really like this. To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable. Because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. And so whenever people say, oh, I can't forgive that person, I say, do you know what the perfect God of the universe has forgiven you of?

who are you to put yourself in the place of God by not forgiving? That spouse, that child, that parent, that in-law, that grandparent.

[12:35] Now, it doesn't mean truth equals trust. I mean, excuse me, that doesn't mean that forgiveness equals trust. I think that trust needs to be rebuilt. But folks, forgiveness is so important that Colossians chapter 3 verse 12 through 13 says, So as those who have been chosen by God, holy and devoted, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so must you also do.

Christ is the foundation of forgiveness. And because we're image bearers, we get to experience not only the benefit and the blessing of receiving his forgiveness, but because he's willing to forgive you

and me, guess what?

We get to forgive others. And I've had people come up to me after I've shared this before and say, Well, you don't know what my son-in-law did to me. You don't know what my daughter-in-law did to me.

You don't know what this person or that person did to me. Yeah, you're right, I don't. I really don't.

And so I don't want to be, I don't want to be insensitive at all this morning. But listen to this.

Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Bitterness is like poison and waiting for the other person to die.

[14:03] You're really, especially if the Johns Hopkins medicine is accurate, you're actually hurting yourself probably more than the other person by not forgiving them. And a lot of times we don't want to forgive.

We want to hold on to that bitterness because we want that other person to hurt. And you actually may be hurting yourself more than that person. You don't have to raise your hands, but how many of us struggle with forgiving people in our family?

It's not easy. They're the ones that are closest to us. They're the ones who know our deepest hurts and struggles. And they should be the most forgiving.

And yet, sometimes we're not. It's interesting. In 2025, Barna research. 2025, Barna's research for flourishing families. I love the family. So important.

And they created these four metrics for a resilient family. And essentially, if your family exhibits zero to one of these traits, it says you're in the fragile category.

[15:05] If it only exhibits two of the four traits, it's struggling. If it has three of the four, it's stable, could use some work, and then four.

If you have four of the traits, you're resilient. And look at the family breakdown. 36% of our families are fragile, according to Barna research.

24% are struggling. That's 60%. And if your family's struggling today, man, get the help you need. And one way might be pursuing forgiveness.

Because look at these four categories that demonstrate what is a resilient family. Number one, shared values. Shared values. Now, I want you to think about this just for a minute.

If I were to walk down this aisle here and ask you, hey, what are your family's five or six core values? Could you answer that? And would the wife and husband be in agreement?

[16:04] I have studied a ton of the life of Jesus. I spent three and a half years studying the life of Jesus in the book of Matthew. And I'm very convinced that Jesus pursues a life that's driven by not just the Holy Spirit, but the values that he has in light of the Holy Spirit leading.

Shared values. Second of all, healthy communication. You know what? I have found in my wife and I's marriage, if we're not forgiving one another, that's affecting our communication quite a bit.

A lot. A lack of forgiveness could even hinder your ability to walk and talk with that person. I love, I love, Jamie, that you and your wife go on walks in the afternoon.

That's often, how often do you do those? Is it once a week, twice a week? Just the week before so you can do the announcement? Sorry. What's that? Two or three times a week?

That's awesome. I find that if I'm not forgiving my wife or having healthy communication, I do not want to go on a walk with her. I know. Maybe an indicator that you don't want to hang out with your spouse might be that there's a lack of forgiveness.

[17:19] But healthy communication, third, emotional connection. Boy, I tell you what, whenever I don't forgive my wife, our connection is way off. In fact, I would say there might not even be one.

And then last but not least, community engagement. It's really hard to minister alongside your spouse whenever there's a lack of forgiveness. I teach and it's a big deal to me when I teach my classes four days a week and I find if my wife and I aren't on the same page, if we're not living out our shared values, if we're not pursuing healthy connections, communication, if we're not emotionally connected, I don't teach as well.

I don't invest in others as well. And I think forgiveness is not only key to thriving families, but a lack of forgiveness or a pursuit of forgiveness can affect positively or negatively each of these metrics.

How are you understanding the significance of forgiveness? forgiveness? Well, not only do we need to understand the importance of forgiveness, but we need to understand that this is part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is giving his ethics for the kingdom.

If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, then we get to live these things out. And in Matthew 633a, it says, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Did you know that this is the only time in the entire Bible that you have the phrase seek first?

[18:53] Entire Bible, you have the phrase seek first, and Jesus says it, and he says, seek what first? The kingdom of God and his righteousness. And members of the kingdom of God, we're not just forgivers, but we're also something else that I'll share with you in just a minute.

But this word righteousness shows up also in Matthew 5, 6, where it says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Man, an expression of righteousness is a person who wants to forgive and is willing to forgive.

And I need to hunger and thirst for this because it falls under this parameter of this word righteousness. And the Greek word there is the *kaiaune*. And I did not, oh, I don't want to give it that way.

I just thought righteousness was doing the right thing. I was growing up, I grew up, and I'm like, okay, you got to do the right thing, do the right thing. You know, you have a choice whether or not to steal, and you choose not to steal because it's the right thing.

You don't do it. But then I did some word study and word research on this word to *kaiaune*, which is righteousness, and it says this. It's the quality or state of judicial correctness with a focus on redemptive action.

[20:06] So it's not just doing about the, it's not just doing the right thing. It's doing it in a way that redeems and restores relationship. It's not just about asking my wife to forgive me or saying, Kat, I'm sorry.

It's, hey, will you forgive me and then take a step further that I'll show you in just a moment.

Because when I've broken that relationship, even though I've asked for forgiveness, to demonstrate there's forgiveness, there's one other thing I need to pursue.

Because it's not just about doing the right thing. It's not just about saying, forgive me. It's about now how do I redeem and restore the relationship that I've had a role in breaking. So if you don't know what redemption is, it is the act of freeing a prisoner, captive, or slave by payment.

The fact of being freed this way. Whenever I hold something against my spouse or when she holds something against me or I hold something against my children or vice versa, they're captive.

They're a prisoner. And I may need to give up that liability so we can experience freedom. Does that make sense? And you guys say, well, what might that be?

[21:20] Now, I want to give you an example of forgiveness and normally folks would say, well, let's just go to Jesus and actually I want to go to a type of Christ in the Old Testament. Someone who represents Christ in the Old Testament.

One of my favorite examples of forgiveness in the Old Testament is a guy named Joseph. Right? Of anybody who has quote unquote the right not to forgive, don't you think it would be Joseph?

I mean, think about what did Joseph's brothers do to him that might have been tough to forgive? I mean, there should be a long list. And if you don't know the story of Joseph, read Genesis 37 through 50 tonight because look at all the things that might be reasons why Joseph might have a reason not to forgive his brothers.

Genesis indicates Joseph's brothers first of all hated him. Sorry, that's not funny but I don't know, I've had people say I hate you before and I'm like, okay, alright, how do we deal with this?

Second, we're unable to speak kindly to him. An indicator there's a lack of forgiveness is an inability to speak kindly to that person. Third, they were jealous of him.

[22:38] Fourth, they plotted to kill him. Pretty good list so far of not to be forgiving. They threw him in a pit. Now I like to grab Princess Bride here and say, they threw him in a pit of despair.

You guys remember that? No? If you haven't, that's a good date night movie, okay? Oops, sorry. Next, he actually cries out for mercy and they ignore it.

They sell him into slavery. They deceive Joseph's dad and they took his coat from him. That beautiful coat that his dad gave him and last but not least, they got blood on the coat of many colors.

Which, if you think it's hard to get blood out of clothing now, think about that 3,000, 4,000 years ago. So, if anybody, of anybody who has a right, and I put that in quotation marks, not to forgive, don't you think it'd be Joseph?

I mean, look at that list. And yet, look what happens here. This is so cool to me. I found this a few years ago.

[23:54] Like, this radically changes my understanding of forgiveness. So, from Genesis chapter 50, verses 15 through 21, trying to, I think this is all out of the NASB.

The other, yeah, NASB. It says, when Joseph's brothers had seen that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him?

So, they sent instructions to Joseph saying, and at this time, I should put this in context, I apologize. Joseph has become the second most powerful person in the known world at that time. He's right below Pharaoh.

So, he's got this great position of power, he's got this great position of responsibility, and man, if anybody could do something to these 11 brothers, it's him. What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrong which we did to him?

So, they sent instructions to Joseph saying, your father commanded us before he died, saying, this is what you shall say to Joseph. Please forgive, I beg you, the offense of your brothers and their sin for they did you wrong.

[25:02] Now, what's interesting here is, in context, there doesn't seem to be any indicator that the dad did this. Which means, even in their attempt to forgive, the brothers might be doing what?

Lying. You ever know that the motivation of that person to ask for forgiveness is just not quite there? You ever just know, man, there's something off about this?

But that's not what Joseph or the direction Joseph takes. He says, and now please forgive the offense of the servants of the God of your father.

And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. And this gets into now, how do we know we are forgiving?

This, again, this blew me away because I always grew up, people would share Genesis 50, 20, great verse, love that verse, but they don't talk about much before and after. And it drives me crazy now.

[26:11] We've got to talk about what's before and after, and I'll share with you why here. Look what it says in 50, 19, and 21. But Joseph said to them, do not be afraid for am I in the place of God.

Remember how I talked about briefly earlier, if we put ourselves in a place of unforgiveness, we make ourselves the idol and put ourselves in the place of God.

Joseph said to them, do not be afraid for am I in the place, for am I in God's place? And then there's this very famous verse, Genesis 50, 20. He says, as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to keep many people alive.

Great. I love this verse. This is amazing. You guys meant evil, but God turned it into good. But do you know what it says after in 21? I mean, you do now because it's up on the screen.

But I would ask you never to memorize 20 without 21. Never, ever. Because look at what 21 says. So therefore, do not be afraid.

[27:22] I will provide for you and your little ones. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Wait a minute. You want to know whether or not you've forgiven somebody?

An indicator that you've actually forgiven somebody, that you're in the process of forgiveness. And I know forgiveness sometimes takes time. I know restoration of relationships sometimes takes time. But you want to know that you've forgiven somebody?

As we'll see, you're looking for ways to bless them. Look at what Joseph does. He blesses. So therefore, don't be afraid. Man, don't be afraid to come in contact with me.

Don't be afraid to have this conversation. I will provide for you and your little ones. He's looking out for blessing his brothers even though they treated him like garbage. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Not only does this point to a foreshadowing of Jesus where it says, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do, but it is pointing out, listen, how do we know we're forgiving? We're blessing.

[28:32] When our husband or our spouse does or says something boneheaded, okay, cat. That's my wife. My wife's name is Cat.

I call her Cat. Her name's Kathy, but I call her Cat and I'm not a big fan of cats, but that's okay. It's kind of ironic. Any cat fans in here? No?

Yeah? I think, yeah, a few of you heard this, but in the Old Testament, in the Old Testament, if, wait, how does it go?

It's a joke that I've used for years now. Maybe that means I don't tell it. Never mind. All right. So, that happens. All right? Oh, that's what, if I were God, there it is, if I were God in the Old Testament, I would have sacrificed cats.

But the reason that God didn't sacrifice cats in the Old Testament is because he knows they have absolutely no value. Okay, so, sorry, sorry. Okay.

[29:29] It's true. I heard somebody say it's true. Thank you for saying that loud enough for me to hear. Folks, we bless. And here's the deal. One of the things that we taught our kids growing up is it's not sufficient to say, hey, I'm sorry about this.

Hey, I'm sorry that I lied to you. I'm sorry that I stole from you. We had one of our children that she was a thief. She would steal for her older sister all the time. It's like, we finally caught her. And it wasn't enough to go and say, I'm sorry.

What needed to be added was, will you forgive me? Will you forgive me? Because that released them of the liability.

Doesn't mean that there wasn't a responsibility to restore relationship there. But folks, I think it's insufficient to say, I'm sorry.

I think we need to say, I'm sorry. Do you forgive me? And give them the opportunity not only to say yes, but also to bless them, to grant prosperity or happiness, to protect them, preserve her, and devote divine favor.

[30:42] Now, I do have to acknowledge one caveat here. Very important. Luke 6, and I love that Jesus says this in Luke 6, 27, 28. It says, but I say to you who hear, love your enemies, whoo, that's hard enough, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who are abusive to you.

Let me read that one more time. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, well look, if my wife and I are at enemy odds or my coworkers at enemy odds, I need to figure out how to do good to them.

Not easy. But isn't that what Christ did? Bless those who curse you. Alright, how am I going to bless those people who hurt my feelings, who offend me?

And last but not least, I find it interesting that Jesus puts this different focus here with those, when he says, pray for those who are abusive to you. It seems that there are some relationships where you may need to bless from afar.

There may be some relationships that aren't safe. There may be some instances where you need to get out of that situation. But it doesn't remove the responsibility to figure out how to bless them.

[32:04] You may need to care for them from afar. How are you doing with blessing the people who've hurt you?

Especially your spouse. Especially your children. Or your in-laws. Who are in some cases very difficult.

How I want to end is with a challenge to forgive. Because Jesus says, listen, for if you forgive other people their offenses, your father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your father will not forgive your offenses.

One of my favorite stories to tell is about my son, Tyler, when he played soccer for the first time. He was three or four years old, and he was the worst soccer player I have ever seen.

Because, I'm going to move around a lot now, cameraman, are you ready? Okay, good. I got a thumbs up. My son, whenever he played soccer, the ball would be on one side of the field, guess where my son would be?

[33:12] The other side. And you guys know what three and four year old soccer is like, right? There's a scrum with the ball, and the ball gets out of the scrum, where do all the kids go?

Towards the ball. Not my son. The ball would come out and he would run to the other side of the field. In fact, he was so bad, the only time he touched the ball was either at the beginning of a game, halftime when they threw it in, or when the other team scored, which was a lot.

But week after week, ball would be on one side, son would be on the other, ball would get out of the scrum, son would run the other way. And we would even practice.

We would practice. Tyler, what is this? He goes, it's a ball. I said, what do you do with the ball? I kick it, Dad. Where do you kick it? Towards the goal. All right, let's practice. We'd practice out in the yard week after week.

Come Saturday, what's my son doing? Same thing. And I'm not upset at this at all because my identity is not bound up in my child's athletic skills, right?

[34 : 26] So one fateful Saturday, after we've been practicing, we're about eight weeks into the season, praying that God would end it with an injury. ball's on one side of the field, son's on the other, ball gets out of the scrum, and my son looks at the ball.

I'm like, this may be his moment. I'm like, Lord, please just let him kick the ball. And I'm actually, I'm not exaggerating at all. This is crazy. So anyway, ball comes out, starts coming towards him, and he looks at the ball.

And I go, this is his moment. But instead of going and running towards the ball, he stands up, hits his chest, and yells, I'm Iron Man! And runs right past the ball!

You can't make this up, people. So I call up my dad. I say, Dad, you will not believe what your grandson is doing. I didn't want to claim him at that point.

I'd claim my dad, but not my son. I said, Dad, you will not believe what he did today. I'm telling him all this stuff. And I said, you won't believe what he did today. He stood up, hit his chest, and yelled, I'm Iron Man!

[35 : 38] And I said, Dad, it's so embarrassing. I just don't know what to do. And my dad said, Son, the next time Tyler stands up, hits his chest, and yells, I'm Iron Man, you stand up, you hit your chest, and you yell, I am Iron Man's dad.

I am Iron Man's dad. You guys get it? Seriously, do you get it?

If you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ, the Father up in heaven who has forgiven you is standing up there saying, I am your Father.

And I love you too much to leave you on the soccer field of life looking as silly as my son did.

But I love you, and I have forgiven you, and the Father is not to forgive others. Because the Father up in heaven, just like I practiced with my son week after week, and he still failed, in fact, it was his last season to play soccer, praise God, I still loved him.

[36 : 55] And it reminded me of God's forgiving love for me. And the Father didn't give up on me. He continued to bless me.

In fact, he blessed you and I so much that if we have placed our faith in him, he says, I have given you my son, I have given you the Holy Spirit, I have given you my word, I have given you this awesome church with a pastor and leadership that my parents says loves the Lord and opens his word well.

I have given you a community, and I'm calling you to experience the life that you have, I have made available to you, and one of the keys to that is not only receive my forgiveness, but extend it to others by going beyond just saying, I'm sorry, to say, I want to bless you even though you hurt me. And I really think that people would be more interested in the kingdom, they would be more interested in Christ, they would be more interested in coming and being part of this fellowship if we as followers of Jesus demonstrated that level of forgiveness to where it goes beyond saying, I'm sorry to, I want to bless you and maybe even sometimes blessing them when they don't ask for forgiveness.

Because isn't that who and what our Savior has, is, and does for us. So here's my challenge. Hopefully it's something that the Holy Spirit is working in your heart and life now.

[38 : 48] In light of and spite of me, who might be three people you need to forgive and bless? Maybe you need ideas. how can I make this person's life better even though they don't deserve it?

Because you know what? I do not deserve to get to be in the forgiveness and grace of Jesus Christ. Who might be three people?

And maybe your list is longer, that's okay. Be honest. But who might be some people that not only need your forgiveness, whether they ask or not, but also need to experience what God has offered to us by blessing?

It's made a huge difference in my wife and I's marriage. It's made a huge difference in my relationship with my kids. And it's made a huge difference in the relationship with people that God brought into my life.

Because the gospel is not solely about this relationship, friends. It is about also restoring relationship amongst fellow kingdom members and those outside the kingdom.

[40 : 10] It's about experiencing the life that God has for us by learning to forgive ourselves and taking care of God's good creation. Let me pray.

Father, thank you for this opportunity to be at War Trace. Thank you for the love that I see whenever I get to come and visit from Colorado to see the parents that you have blessed us with. We thank you for the opportunity to learn and understand and know what it means not only to forgive, but praise God to be forgiven. and we pray that we will look at Joseph's life and Jesus' life and so many others who have modeled the significance of what it means to bless despite being hurt.

And we thank you ultimately for our example in Christ. Thank you for this opportunity. I pray your blessing on each person here as they go out into this world and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

In the precious and holy and righteous and mighty name of Jesus, all God's people said, amen, amen. Thank you very much. God bless. God bless. Thank you.