



## **Love, Learn, Live the Word (Colossians 3:13)**

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13).

### *Love the Word*

Have you had the opportunity to forgive someone who has wronged you? Jesus likened withholding forgiveness to a prison (Matthew 18:21-35). The irony is that the person who will not forgive is the one locked inside the four walls. *Forgive* means “to let go.” In order to forgive someone who has wounded us, we must *let go* of four prison walls that incarcerate us in the prison of un-forgiveness. If we hold on to only one, then we will still remain imprisoned.

### *Learn the Word*

Forgiveness flows from the heart: the will, intellect (mind), spirit, and emotions (Matthew 18:35). Thus, we choose, think, pray, and want to forgive in order to be free. The Bible teaches that two heart conditions exist: *proud* or *humble*. A proud heart is hard, unforgiving, and holds on. A humble heart is soft, forgiving, and lets go. When someone harms us, we either *hold on*, or we *let go*. When we hold on, we remove the vertical, our relationship with God, from the horizontal, our relationship with others, taking matters into our own hands. Consequently, we break up the cross into four pieces—each piece representing a prison wall: revenge, regret, resentment, and resisting blessing. Ironically, the one incarcerated is not the offender, but the withholder.

Forgiveness does not occur horizontally in relationships without first occurring vertically with God in Christ. So, we are not the one forgiving, or letting go. Christ in us lets go. In order to forgive others, we must first receive forgiveness from God. Freedom in Christ from the penalty, power, and, one day, the presence of sin leads to freedom in relationships with others (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). Forgiveness frees us for reconciliation. Forgiveness always precedes reconciliation, but reconciliation does not always follow forgiveness because reconciliation takes two.

Forgiveness welds together two ideas: justice and mercy. Both are found in Christ and are displayed in their ultimate clarity at the cross. The key that unlocks the prison of withholding forgiveness is crossed-shaped, humility toward God and others. Christ in us empowers us to let go of revenge (Romans 12:19); regret (2 Corinthians 7:10); resentment (Ephesians 4:31-32); and resisting blessing (Matthew 5:43-48).

### *Live the Word*

Memorize Colossians 3:13 and recite it each day. This month, try the instant forgiveness experiment. Every time that you are wronged, instantly let go of the offense and the offender. Do this by remembering that the biggest debt ever incurred was let go of you in Christ. While the offense against you horizontally might hurt, it pales in comparison to the weight of your sin against God. You will not be the one letting go; rather, it will be Christ in you. He will set you free.