

Lesson 8

Social Needs Satisfied

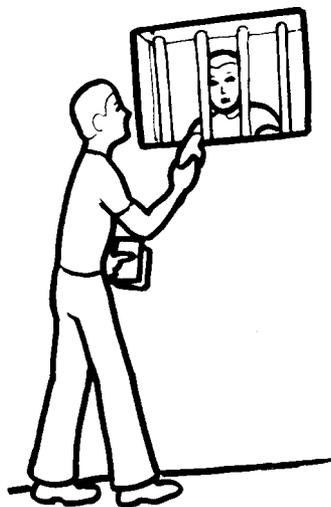
“Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us”

Matthew 6:12

This lesson is a sobering one. We set the conditions for our own forgiveness! Can it be that we can lose God’s forgiveness by refusing to forgive others? Won’t God be faithful to forgive even if we are unfaithful? The answer is, “No, not if these words recorded in the Bible are true.” And they are true!

Is it possible to pray with an unforgiving spirit and expect God to answer? Can we really worship God and at the same time hate our brother? Can we pray for people we really don’t like? Can we worship the Creator of all men and then refuse to evangelize all men of other races, nations, and tribes?

Prayer and worship do affect our attitude toward others. Think about it! As human beings we have certain “social” needs that must be met. What is the purpose of prayer and worship if it cannot help us love our neighbors?



lesson outline

The Conditions for Forgiveness
Praying for God's Forgiveness
Praying for Grace to Forgive

The Conditions for Peace
The Cross of Man
The Yoke of Christ

lesson objectives

When you have finished this lesson you should be able to:

- Recognize how forgiveness from God is related to our forgiveness of others.
- Explain what *the cross of man* is and how to bear it through prayer and worship.

learning activities

1. Read the course objectives in the beginning of this book once again, and see if you can do all that has been suggested there.
2. Learn Matthew 6:14-15 and Matthew 11:28-30.

- 3. Review the self-test questions in Unit 2 on “The Priority of Worship.”
- 4. Look over the key word list for each lesson and see if you have learned the meaning of words you did not know.

key words

- nation-centered
- race-centered
- social
- tribe-centered

lesson development

THE CONDITIONS FOR FORGIVENESS

Objective 1. *Describe the conditions for forgiveness as Jesus stated them in Matthew 6:14-15.*

The relationship of forgiveness to prayer and worship is very clear in the teaching of Jesus. He referred to it when He prayed, and made special mention of it after His prayer.

Anyone can love his friends, and most people can forgive those they love. But the forgiveness Jesus was talking about in Matthew 6:14-15 was forgiveness to those who have wronged us. He did not say “friends” who have wronged us. He just said “those who have wronged us.” That would include those who are enemies and those who refuse to say, “I’m sorry!”

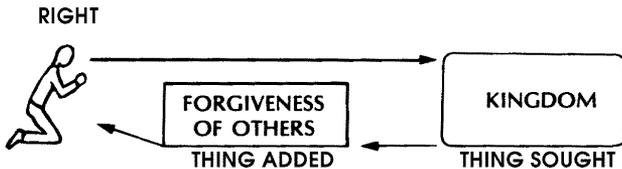
1 Why is the forgiveness that Jesus taught difficult?

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Notice, too, He didn’t say, “Forgive us as we ask forgiveness of those whom we have wronged.” No, it was the other way. We are to forgive those who have done the wrong. We are to ask God to forgive us. As a Christian we should also ask those we have offended to forgive us. God’s forgiveness to us is not based on our asking people to forgive us. It is based on forgiving others, whether they ask forgiveness or not. It may be they have refused to ask forgiveness of both us and God. That makes no difference, though, as to what we ought to do. We must forgive them if we want to be forgiven by God!

- 2 Circle the letter to the left of each TRUE statement.
- a We should forgive those who have wronged us.
- b We should forgive only if others forgive us.
- c We should only forgive our friends who have wronged us.
- d We should wait to forgive until men say, "I'm sorry."

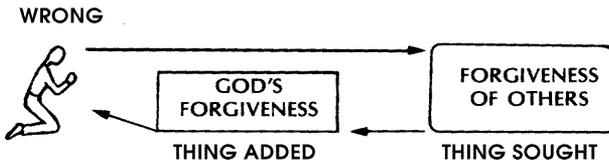
It can be easy to forgive a man who says, "I'm sorry." But it is very hard to forgive someone who refuses to repent. In fact, you cannot do it by yourself. The human spirit is not a forgiving spirit. That is why prayer and worship are so important in the matter of forgiveness. Our relationship to God must be right before our relationship with men can be right. That is why we say that the forgiveness of those who have wronged us comes by being concerned, above everything else, with the kingdom of God. Then, and only then, are we able to forgive those who have wronged us. It is one of the things added to those who put the kingdom first. It is one of the things God helps us to do if we worship Him above all else. So, forgiving those who have wronged us is done in this way:



- 3 Why do we need to pray in order to forgive?

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Strange, isn't it? You would think that because Jesus was saying we should forgive others, that is what we should seek. Then it would look like this:



This looks like the right way except for one thing. We are not seeking forgiveness from those who have wronged us. We are being asked by God to forgive them! We are not seeking forgiveness from others. We are seeking to forgive others! And that is why this last illustration is wrong. You cannot forgive others by yourself. It isn't natural and it isn't human. It requires help from above. It takes God's help. So, we return to our first

illustration for the answer. Seek God's kingdom and God's glory, and He will help you forgive even your enemies. He will also forgive you!

4 In which way do the two illustrations differ?

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Praying for God's Forgiveness

Of course, life as a believer starts with faith and forgiveness from God. The sinner seeks forgiveness. God forgives him whether he has forgiven others or not. He forgives him because he believes—not because he stops sinning!

But once the sinner believes, he is no longer a sinner! He is a believer. Jesus' words in Matthew 6:5-13 were to the believers! Jesus says, "Be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God . . . and he will provide you with all these other things" (Matthew 6:33). That's how forgiveness to others is made possible. God will provide the power and grace to do it!

5 When the sinner seeks forgiveness from God, he is forgiven because

- a) he forgives others.
- b) of his faith.
- c) he stops sinning.

6 When a believer seeks forgiveness from God, he is forgiven because he

- a) forgives others.
- b) forgives himself.
- c) stops sinning.

Praying for Grace to Forgive

Have you been carrying hate in your heart? Are there people you are refusing to forgive? Are you calling yourself a Christian but not acting like a child of God? Do not deceive yourself. Do not go on another day with bitterness and an unforgiving spirit. Ask to be made more like Jesus. Ask for a spirit of forgiveness. Ask for a spirit of love. Ask for a spirit of peace. Ask for a spirit of righteousness. Ask for a spirit of joy. Ask for grace to forgive—to be Christlike!

That is what Jesus meant by saying that we should be concerned about God’s kingdom above everything else. The kingdom of God is the righteousness, peace, and joy the Holy Spirit gives. Get the kingdom within you, and you will receive the grace to forgive others!

7 What should a person do if he has bitterness in his heart?

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THE CONDITIONS FOR PEACE

Objective 2. Write a statement explaining how Christ can make “the cross of man” easy to bear.

It is not easy to live at peace with all men. Every man is different. Tribes are different. Nations are different. Races are different. Cultures are different. The world is made up of many classes of men—the unwise and the wise, the rich and the poor, etc. I repeat, living at peace with all men is not easy.

World leaders struggle with this problem constantly, but they make very little progress. Man rises against man, wife against husband, children against parents, nation against nation. Where is the answer to peace? The answer is in letting Jesus help us bear our crosses.

The Cross of Man

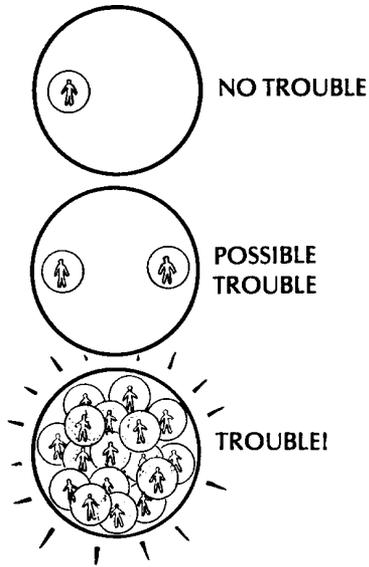
Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross. . . ” (Matthew 16:24 KJV). The *cross of man* is self-denial. Self-denial is impossible for the self-centered man. The cross of man is hard to bear because it requires giving up one’s will in order to live at peace with others. That is why efforts of nations to make peace do not succeed. That is why the world is filled with hatred, war, and violence.

8 What is the *cross of man* and why is it so hard to bear?

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Let us consider the problem of the self-centered man. Suppose there was only one man in all the world. He would have no one to deny him his will, no one to argue with, and no one to trouble him or to say “no” to his wants. It is possible that he could be self-centered and still live in peace.

Now suppose we add one more man to the world. You would now have two wills to deal with. If each man was self-centered, you would not want to put them close together or their wills would conflict. So you would put one on one side of the world and one on the other side.



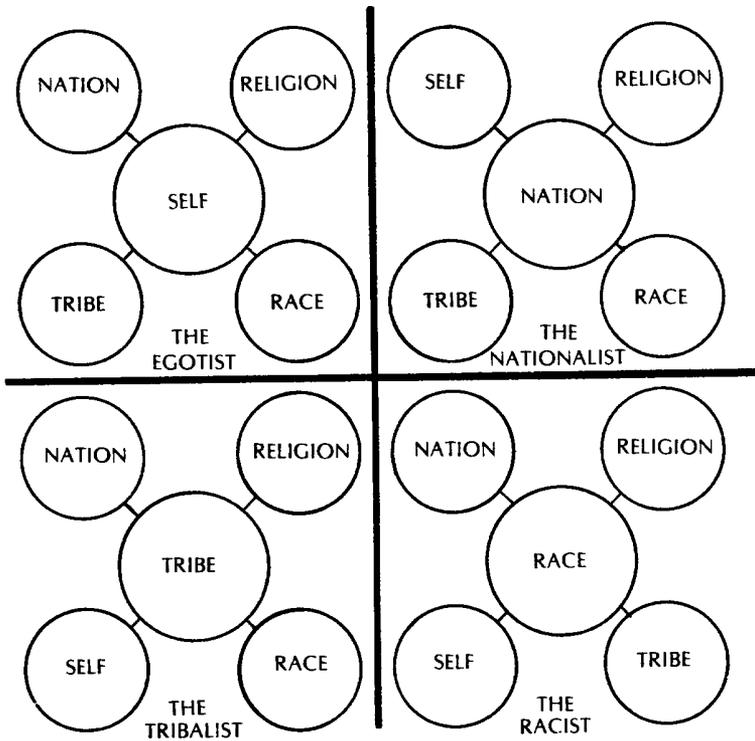
But what happens when we add many more self-centered men to the earth? They will have to live closer together, and soon their wills and activities will begin to conflict. When this happens, there is certain to be a struggle of wills, and there will be trouble.

In a world of so many thousands of people, there is little peace. There is little rest. Why? Because the world is full of self-centered men, each wanting his own will to be done on earth. Each becoming angry with all those opposing him.

9 Why is there often conflict where there are several people?

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Let us take a closer look at the self-centered man. He is the center of all that he sees and knows. He judges others “good” or “bad” by how they treat him. Members of his family and his tribe are “good” or “bad” depending on whether he gets the respect and honor from them that he thinks that he deserves. If his brother marries the girl he himself wanted, he judges his brother to be “bad.” If his father gives him an ox, he judges his father to be “good.” He looks at people from other nations and judges them as possible enemies and not as “good” as those of his own nation. Those of his own race are “better” than those of another race. He makes all these judgments because he is either self-centered, tribe-centered, religion-centered, nation-centered, or perhaps, race-centered. We can illustrate what we are talking about like this:

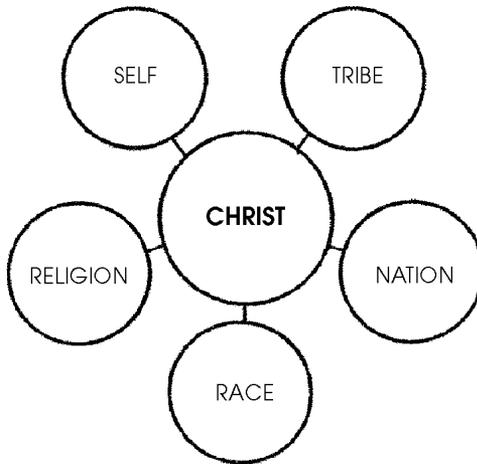


10 How does the self-centered man judge others?

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Now, any one of these can make trouble if they become the center of man's seeking. In times of war, a very honorable man will be judged "evil" by the enemy, not because he is himself evil, but just because he belongs to the nation which is at war with his own! When self, tribe, nation, religion, or race become the most important thing in a man's life, it becomes the center of his seeking. Their single standard of "goodness" depends upon what is in the center of their lives. This opens the door for all kinds of conflicts.

As believers, let us not lose sight of Christ, who is the true center of our lives. This is the way the drawing should look:



11 The center of a believer's life should be

- a) self.
- b) race.
- c) Jesus.
- d) religion.

The Yoke of Christ

The condition for peace, as Jesus taught it, was to remove self, family, tribe, nation, and race from the center of our lives, and to put Christ and His kingdom there (Romans 8:6). By doing so, things would be judged "good" or "bad" by how they affected the kingdom of God.

This would divide the world into two groups—those who are the children of God's kingdom, and those who are the children of the devil. The children of God would be content and happy, because they would all be seeking the same thing. They would be seeking to honor God's will.

12 What is Christ's solution for the cross of man?

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The self-centered man cannot understand the emphasis upon "things above." However, the self-centered man should be loved by the child of God. The child of God should seek to win the self-centered man to the kingdom of God, knowing that Christ, by dying on the cross, died to lighten the cross of self-denial. This is a cross which must be carried by all men. You see, man finds the cross of self-denial unavoidable yet unbearable. He

cannot escape the need to deny himself in order to live with others in this world. Yet he is unwilling to give up his wants and his "rights." Because of this unwillingness to deny himself, laws are needed to make him respect others and yield to their rights and wishes. He obeys the law, but he is miserable and angry, because he is self-centered!

13 What is the believer's message to the self-centered man?

Christ told us to come to Him and to put on His yoke (Matthew 11:28-29). One who does not put on Christ's yoke carries the cross alone. Sinful men find the cross of self-denial unbearable. For the believer, Christ calls it a "yoke." Why? Because a yoke is always a shared burden—carried together. So, Jesus says to us, "Bring your cross to me . . . we will bear it together . . . my yoke will bind us together under the burden . . . and you will find that my yoke is easy, and my burden light!"



14 What is the difference between a cross and a yoke?

Once again we see the value of prayer and worship. This is the "come unto me" that is our part to do. When we go to Jesus in prayer, the burden of getting along with people is made easy. Those who are fighting with men of other families, tribes, nations, and races find that Jesus has the answer to their problem. By putting Christ at the center of our lives, it is possible to live at peace with all men. By being concerned about the kingdom of God above everything else, we open the door of forgiveness to one another, and thereby receive the forgiveness of God!

15 Christ's yoke is easy because

- a) Christians don't have as many problems as sinners.
- b) Christ is there to share the burden with us.
- c) Christ takes our cross away.

Even though Christ is the center of our lives, other relationships such as those involving family, friends, and society remain important to us. We still love our children and our families, but they are not at the center of our lives—Christ is. This means that all who believe in Jesus are our brothers and sisters, no matter what their nation, race, religion, or tribe.

16 What is the relationship of Christ-centered men of different nations to each other?

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So, prayer and worship are important They help us put Christ at the center of our lives. When Christ is the center of our lives, it is possible to live in peace with all men!

self-test

SHORT ANSWERS. Write the correct answer in the space provided.

1 Why do we need to pray in order to forgive?

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2 How does being concerned about the kingdom of God above everything else help us in praying about forgiveness?

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3 How is it possible to forgive those who have wronged us?

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4 What is the cross of man?

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5 How does the self-centered man judge the good and bad in the world around him?

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6 Name five things that may become the center of life for men.

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7 What is Christ's solution for the *cross of man*?

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answers to the study questions

- 9 Each wants to have his own will done.
- 1 Because it requires that we forgive all who have wronged us.
- 10 He judges others by how they treat him.
- 2 a True.
b False.
c False.
d False.
- 11 c) Jesus.
- 3 The human spirit is not a forgiving spirit. We need help from God.
- 12 To put Christ at the center of life.
- 4 In one of them man is seeking the kingdom; in the other, man is seeking to forgive others.
- 13 Christ by dying on the cross lightens the cross of self-denial.
- 5 b) is forgiven because of his faith.
- 14 A cross is carried alone; a yoke is a shared burden.
- 6 a) forgives others.
- 15 b) Christ is there to share the burden with us.
- 7 Ask to be made like Jesus; ask for grace to forgive.
- 16 They are brothers and sisters in the family of God.
- 8 Self-denial. It requires giving up our wills in order to live at peace with others.

For Your Notes