

## ***Forgiveness***

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*  
--Matthew 5:23-24

On a television magazine show not too long ago, there was an incredible story of forgiveness. A family of six was camping out, sleeping in tents in a public park. In the middle of the night, a man cut a hole in the tent and carried away their 7-year-old daughter.

Immediately, the mother began to pray for the kidnapper and made a commitment to forgive. A year later he called and the family learned what the mother knew in her heart all along—the child was dead.

The mother said, "Forgiveness is hard work, but it is the only thing that will set you free."

Unwillingness to forgive allows bitterness to creep in to our hearts and plant roots. Hebrews 12:15 says, "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

Bitterness can spread to those around us, and if it is left to harden in the heart, it is almost seemingly impossible to remove. Scripture is clear about wiping away the offenses in our life, and doing it quickly.

If you feel like someone owes you something or if there is something standing in the way of you not thanking God every day for the blessings you have, bitterness can begin to set in. All you need is a few cleaning tools to scrub away the stains of bitterness—compassion and forgiveness.

If you harbor bitter feelings toward someone in your life—a family member, a church leader, or a friend—then immediately approach that person and learn to forgive them. Make a commitment, today, to begin the spring spiritual cleaning in your life.

**PRAYER CHALLENGE:** Ask the Lord to daily clean out the grime of bitterness in your heart in order that you may reflect an accurate image of Christ to those around you.

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