

9. Considering what Jesus says in Matthew 6:14-15, what would happen if God forgave you in the exact the same manner you forgive others?

Conversely, what would happen if you forgive others in the same graceful way God forgives you?

**Last Word:** Let's go back to the Sermon on the Mount and this time to the seventh beatitude, "*Blessed are the peacemakers*" Jesus says, "*for they will be called sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9). As we've seen demonstrated in our lesson, the Lord's teaching goes far beyond a merely peaceful disposition to an active attempt to "*make*" peace. It is a characteristic of God's true people to "*seek peace and pursue it*" (Psalm 34:14). All those who endeavor to promote peace are like the Father and are worthy to be called His children.

Do you want to be a child of God, reflecting the holy qualities of our Father? Then seek peace and unity. Make peace with those whom you have wronged. Forgive those who have wronged you. When we commit ourselves to this goal, we'll demonstrate to the world the love, grace, and mercy that is to be found in God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. And doesn't world need more love, grace, mercy?

**Prayer:** Ask God to give you a spirit that seeks peace and unity by being humble enough to say, "I'm sorry" and "I forgive."

## Lesson 5

# *Saying I'm Sorry*

## Matthew 5:21-26

Whenever Micah has some playtime with his friends or cousins he will undoubtedly bonk one of them on the head, or take their toy away. On such occasions I will get to exercise my stern-parent voice saying, "Micah, say you're sorry." As four-year-olds go, Micah can have a frustratingly stubborn will against apologizing. All of this makes me wonder how frustrating it must be to God when a grown adult, acting like a four year-old, refuses to say, "I'm sorry."

Discord between people is inevitable. Therefore, nearly all of what the scriptures has to say about conflict is geared toward resolving issues to bring about peace and unity through forgiveness and reconciliation.

The apostle Paul instructs us, "*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*" (Romans 12:18). In order to live out this directive, we'll have to honestly humble ourselves and say, "I'm sorry" to those we've hurt. In return, we'll also have to graciously say, "I forgive you" to those who've pained us. The question that all of us must answer is this, will we live out the high calling of our faith by humbly seeking peace or will we pridefully perpetuate discord? *Read Matthew 5:21-26.*

1. Look closely at Matthew 5:17-48 noting the repeated phrase, "*You have heard that it was said... but I say...*" What do you think Jesus means by these words?

2. In your own words, restate the Lord's teaching on murder and anger from vv. 21-22.

3. After establishing our culpability to angry thoughts and actions, why do you think Jesus would want us to seek reconciliation with someone we've offended before we offer our worship to God? (vv. 23-24; cf. 1 John 4:20-21)

4. Despite our Lord's teaching, we're often reluctant to seek to make amends with people we've wronged. From your perspective, list a couple of reasons why we act like this, along with how we can overcome these obstacles.

5. Jesus ends His teaching on reconciliation with a short parable illustrating the need for reconciliation (vv. 25-26). Elaborate on what might all be involved in "*Come[ing] to terms quickly*" (ESV) with someone you've wronged.

Now let's turn our attention to the other person in this equation... the one who has been hurt.

6. The apostle Paul exhorts us to, "*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you*" (Ephesians 4:32). In your own words, what does it mean to forgive those who have sinned against you?

7. What reasons have you used (or could you use) to resist forgiving another person?

How would you counsel another Christian who came to you with these same reasons for not forgiving someone else?

8. Why is overcoming our excuses for not forgiving such a critical aspect of our walk of faith? (see Matthew 6:14-15; John 13:35; 17:20-23)