

LIFE GROUP STUDY

As you likely know, different Christian traditions word this fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer differently.

Some pray, "**Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.**"

Some, in light of Jesus' use of the word "transgression" in his elaboration, pray, "**Forgive us our transgressions, as we forgive those who transgress against us.**"

Some, following the version of the prayer in Luke 11, pray, "**Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who sins against us.**"

And some, following the New English Bible, pray, "**Forgive us the wrong we have done, as we have forgiven those who have wronged us.**"

Darrell Johnson
Fifty -seven words that changed the world

Question : Which of the four different versions of the words of Jesus resonates with you more? Why?

Forgive us our debts...

Origen (an early church father who lived from about A.D. 185-254) helpfully summed up the three-fold nature of the debt we owe.

First, the debt we owe to our fellow humans: to parents, to children, to strangers, to the poor, to the aged, to those in authority; to love our neighbor as we love our self; to love one another as Jesus loves us.

Second, the debt we owe to ourselves: to our body, not to abuse it, to care for it as God's temple; to our mind, to use it in such a way that it gets sharper as we grow; to our soul, to watch over it so that we live in holiness and vitality.

Third, the debt we owe to God: to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; to trust God with all our needs and worries. While we are alive, says Origen, "there is not a single hour, day or night," when we are "not a debtor."

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Question : What, in a persons life, are the effects of unresolved wrongs or sins they have committed? Does this hold true for small, seemingly inconsequential things [such as moments of anger or worry]? Do you think asking God for forgiveness is enough or is more require to resolve it?

As we forgive our debtors.

For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents [about 10 million dollars].

But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him saying “have patience with me and I will repay you everything” [How will he repay 10 million dollars?!]. And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

But that slave went out and found one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii [about one hundred dollars]; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, “Pay back what you owe.” So his fellow-slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, “Have patience with me and I will repay you.” He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

So when his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, “You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?” And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother [or sister] **from your heart.**

Matthew 18 : 23 - 35

Question : How does the bill of 10 million dollars illustrate our debt with God?

What do you notice about what the slave asked the master to do versus what the master actually did? What does this teach us about the work of forgiveness from God in our lives? How much further does Gods forgiveness go than we expect?

Why couldn't the man relate the mercy he had just received to the other slaves situation? What does it tell us about our own struggle to forgive and our understanding of salvation?

What is Jesus definition of what true forgiveness actually is [last words of vs 35]? What does he mean by that expression?

Question : What are some differences between the neighbour who was petitioned in the first parable and the judge in the second? What are some similarities? Which is a better representation of God; a friend or a judge? How does your view of God affect your prayer?

Why does the judge refuse her for some time? Do you think one of the points of the parable is that God, like the judge, sometimes deliberately leaves prayer unanswered or is this totally missing the point? [compare the judges behaviour to God's in vs 8]

Jesus wonders whether people will still pray with faith [vs 8]. What, according to this parable, does faith filled prayer actually look like [*focus on the widows actions and thinking*]?

Is desperate prayer the same as faith filled prayer?