

God's Sweet Sixteen – Part 5

In God's Sweet Sixteen; this is part five. In part one we covered *pray* and *praise*; in part two, *seek*, *surrender*, *rejoice*; in part three *repent*; in part four *rest*, *humble*, and *obey*. Today we will cover *give* (and a major part although not all of) *forgive*.

To give is to obviously share. We can't share what we don't have; but we share because we love. We're called to love others as we love ourselves. So the idea of meeting all our own needs and not meeting needs of those around us who are in need would be contrary to the love of Scripture. To give is to be open-hearted toward others; and thus, open-minded toward others; and thus, open handed toward others. To give cheerfully is to live in faith in our provider God with a psychology of abundance rather than a psychology of scarcity. That's part of our faith pleasing God as we're told in Hebrews 11:6. And that's why we're told in II Corinthians 9:7 that God loves a cheerful giver. Early on in my Christian walk I had a bit of struggle with the Scripture, Mark 14:3-9. That's the story of the woman who poured out costly perfume over the head of Jesus. For years I couldn't understand that because I had the same question as Scripture tells us those around asked. Should not this perfume have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor? Her behavior did not seem like good stewardship to me. Then I received the revelation. I was operating (and still do in some part) in the psychology of scarcity. This essentially takes the natural realm, and the thought process related to it, and projects it into the spiritual realm using natural limitations.

That leads to the phrase that we're all familiar with, of the quote “Zero sum mentality”. That means that whatever I give away, I will have less of it in the future. The woman who poured out the year's worth of perfume was looking through spiritual eyes of faith in her omnipotent God, the God Who loved her. When looking through spiritual eyes and knowing who Jesus Christ is, there are three conclusions. He is worthy of all glory. I will withhold nothing from Him. And if He wants me to have more perfume in the future then He in His omnipotence is fully able to provide it. That is the psychology of abundance. That's what pleases God; because it means that you're looking in faith and your faith is working through love. But whenever you try to parcel out the giving or ascertain how much you'll need in the future to decide how much to give, we all do that somewhat; but the point I'm making is in these two frames of reference, there's one that fully pleases God. There are probably others that may partially please God. But the self-centered frame of reference will never please God. If we ask ourselves, “Why does God love a cheerful giver?” the answer is one of the more reassuring truths of Scripture. God only loves any characteristic in us that is in the image of Himself. Thus when the Bible tells us that God loves a cheerful giver, it is also telling us that God is a cheerful giver. The revelation that God is a cheerful giver is what empowers us to progressively grow in cheerfully giving. I had to learn that even in regard to revelation from Scripture. There was a time when I would feel a little twinge of resentment if somebody quoted something that I had cleverly said about the truth of Scripture. But now I know that all of that twinge was 100% self-centered. Now I know that the more revelation that I receive, the more I give away, and cheerfully so. And the more that I give away, the more I receive because God is entirely pleased to give me more. I do not have to hoard revelation. I do not have to seek a footnote if someone happens to say something that I have cleverly said about Scripture; because I've now learned at least in that area what the woman

had learned that she did not have to hoard perfume when she was dealing with her sovereign God.

Next poster. I like to use mnemonics which simply means a memory device to help me recall certain things. Cheerful giving is not limited only to money, although possessions are what get emphasized. It can be summarized by the following. These words as you can see all spell out “Team” when taken collectively: T-E-A-M. We may differ in the amount of money that we have; but we all have the same amount of time; thus, time is the first one. But giving time is not sufficient in itself. We're also to give energy. We can give time while our minds are far away. We can give time while we're preoccupied with a million other things. To do that means that we're giving counterfeit time because we're not giving attention, focus, concentration; and thus, not giving all of ourselves to that which we are claiming to give time to. This gives the appearance of giving time without giving time. That's why I use the word energy to mean that we're not only to use units of time in giving to other people; but to give ourselves fully to the unit of time that we are giving to other people.

Also we're to give of our aptitudes. I mean by this our natural gifts and our spiritual gifts. Then, of course, we're to give of our money using money as a summary term to include all of our material possessions. When we do these things, then we fulfill Romans 12:1 which speaks of becoming a living sacrifice. And as we grow in our spirituality and our Christlikeness, we begin to be a living sacrifice without regarding it as sacrificial. And that would be when death to self has occurred, when self has fully been denied, and when we're living out of the spirit focused solely, entirely, completely, overwhelmingly on Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

But there are two more things that we need to be attentive about in regard to giving. The first is what I call the giving cycle. And by adopting that terminology, I'm using the analogy in the natural realm of the hydrology cycle—that is the cycle of water. It begins in the clouds. It falls as rain, collected by the rivers, flows into the ocean, evaporates from the ocean and goes back to the clouds. So water begins in the clouds and ends in the clouds, so to speak. So with the giving cycle, what do I mean? I Corinthians 4:7 – What do you have that you did not receive? Next, Colossians 3:17 – And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Colossians 3:23 – Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men. Matthew 25:40 – He who gives a cup of cold water gives unto Me. So imagine this in regard to the giving cycle. Whatever we give is to be given as if from the Lord, in the name of the Lord, for the Lord, unto the Lord. When done that way, who gets the glory? Well, He does. Who should get it? He should. When not done that way, with that attitude of the giving cycle, who gets the glory? You do; at least in part. Should you get it? No. Isaiah 42:8- My glory I will not give to another. Why should the creator God Who gave the Heavens and the Earth, Who then created us, Who has given us all the resources that we are taking credit for giving, want to give us any glory for doing so? He's the only thing in existence truly worthy of glory and that revelation is rooted and grounded in the Holiness of God, which is why I address holiness before I will address any other subject in the spiritual realm. All of the behaviors of fallen men center around trying to steal the glory of God. We Christians, regrettably, are still notorious for doing so. We are to stop that behavior.

Giving to get is to steal the glory of God, one of the weaknesses of the prosperity message, because the giving is done that you may get more back in return. I scratch your back and you scratch mine, is a common term in the business realm. But that mentality is not really giving; it is giving to get. That is bartering, not giving.

That may also mean giving to get praise from others. John 6:44 (Jesus says) – How can you believe when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the One and only God? In other words, giving to get praise from others is synonymous with unbelief in God. Giving to get from others is always rooted in self. That is pride. Pride resists God by stealing the glory of God which is why God will resist the proud. So you may give your whole net worth to the church; but if you're giving to get praise from the church about what a good Christian you are, then it's 100% rooted in self and 0% rooted in faith in God. Is there any legitimate praise? Of course there is. But not when receiving praise is our primary goal for whatever we're giving. If I give teaching to receive praise from those who listen, then I'm 100% self-centered and giving no glory to God. We are to give as if from the Lord, in the name of the Lord, for the Lord and unto the Lord. That is humility expressed in regard to giving. Then we leave the exalting for God, remember? Matthew 23:12 – Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. You surely recall how I humorously stated our job as Christians is to humble ourselves. God's job is to do any exalting of us that occurs. When we try to God's job (which is to exalt ourselves), then He will do our job which is to humble us.

The second follow-up point about giving is this. Only giving with the right motivation counts anything at all. I Corinthians 13:3 – And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. God is love. That's why God is a cheerful giver. How can we claim to give in His name when we do not give out of His motivation which is love? Acts 20:35 tells us – It is more blessed to give than to receive. But there's the sum of the Word of God that has to be dealt with in regard to that Scripture. You can be full of hate and meaner than a snake and still give. But you're not blessed because you have no love, no joy, and no peace within you. You are giving grudgingly and of necessity. You are giving to get and you're stealing the glory of God and you're seeking the praise of man. At least one or more of those motivations is included. That is to give grudgingly and of necessity and not cheerfully. But when you give and give cheerfully so, motivated by love, then you know God; because otherwise you could not do that. The natural man can give with all of those self-centered motivations. But only someone who knows God can give with the proper motivation called love.

Next poster. We're going to transition into the next subject for today which is **forgive**. But we're going to begin with an analysis of time. Time, as you know, has three major divisions—past, present, and future. In regard to the past, a Scripture that I enjoy is Isaiah 43:18-19 (where it says) – Do not call to mind the former things, nor ponder the things of the past; I have begun a new thing; do you not even know it? In other words, constant focus on the past will mean that you will not even know what new thing God has done in your life or is doing right now. In regard to the future Jesus said in Matthew 6:34 – Take no thought of the morrow. He said in Luke 12:7 (basically) – Fear not the future. The precious present is the only place where true worship can occur.

Next poster. The next poster takes the precious present and carves it up into divisions; because you can be in the precious present but consuming it with considerations about the past or considerations about the future. But you can't worship God in the past—it's past. And you can't worship God in the future—it's future. The only moment that you can give worship to your Holy God is right here right now. But you can also consume your precious present with unholy considerations—things which are giving no worship to God. We're familiar with the usage of the words in everyday life of good, better, and best to mean something which is progressively growing toward the ideal. You can also call it holy, holier, and holiest using the Scriptural term. The point I'm making by such words is this. You can be thinking a good thought that is worshipful toward God; but there may yet be one which would be a better spiritual thought to bring even more worship to God. And there may be one out of all the considerations for that moment that you could bring the best worship to God. You've heard the common phrase that the good is the enemy of the best. What I'm pointing out here with the precious present is it can be consumed by things of the past. There are proper things to think about the past which are worshipful such as recalling the ways that God has delivered you from things in your past. That enhances and kindles the flame of worship. As David said, my God Who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this Philistine. That was a worshipful act by recalling deliverance from the past. But we're not to consume our precious present with thoughts related to the past such as unforgiveness which is the subject I'm heading into. We're not to consume our precious present with considerations from the past with thoughts such as self condemnation where you're sacrificing worship to God by withdrawing from the precious present focusing on condemning yourself which is just one more way of remaining self-centered.

We're also not to consume the precious present with considerations for the future. There are legitimate considerations for the future which are themselves worshipful toward God such as your vision. Scripture tells us without a vision the people perish. Our vision is the accumulated promises of God and every promise of God is yes in Jesus. So when we're meditating over a promise of God which will be yes in Jesus, that is a worshipful act, although related to future considerations. So there are legitimate future thoughts and past thoughts which are themselves worshipful in the precious present. But we're not to consume the future with such considerations as revenge where we're holding unforgiveness for someone who violated us in the past; and we're not to live in fear of the future. Remember, we're to consolidate our fears in one fear—the fear of the Lord. So when we're fearing something else about the future in the natural realm or whatever, then we're giving glory to that thing. How can you give glory to that thing that you're fearing in the natural realm and still claim that you're worshipping your God in the precious present?

Unforgiveness is to live in the past. You cannot worship God in your past. Unforgiveness is to refuse to worship. To forgive is to refuse to live in the past so as to be free to worship in the precious present. That helps us understand Matthew 5:23-24 – If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering. Because where there's not reconciliation, you will not be able to properly worship; so why come and leave a sacrifice on the altar when your heart is far from the altar?

Forgiveness also models the love of Jesus for Jesus effectively said I would rather pay the price for your sins and go through Hell for you than to hold your sins against you. I would rather pay the price so I can forgive you than not to have a relationship with you for eternity future. Luke 7:47 (He also taught us) – He who is forgiven little loves little. Why do I introduce this concept? When you think that your sins that Jesus paid for were a little, then you will think that it only took a little love for Jesus to pay the little price for your little sins. That means that you will love little because you will have a revelation of the love of God as being little. That's why he who is forgiven little loves little. I John 3:16 – We know love by this; that He laid down His life for us. That's how you know love. But when you consider that that love exhibited on the cross of Christ to be only a little in order to pay for your little sins, then you will love little because you will see little of the love of God.

Unforgiveness is to state that it took less mercy for God to forgive your sin (because it was little) than it would take for you to forgive the greater sin of the one that you consider having violated you. So unforgiveness is to state that you had only a little sin and that you, therefore, love little. That's to say that you consider your ways higher than the ways of God. He said to forgive, you say you'd rather not and choose that behavior. That is to say that you derive more pleasure from unforgiveness than you derive pleasure from giving glory to God by modeling God's character to the one that you're holding unforgiveness against. You'd rather display self than display the character of God. We're called to be earthen vessels, not of self, but of God Himself.

Next poster. Unforgiveness is to take offense. It may be unspoken, but it includes taking offense at God; because you cannot take offense at someone else without simultaneously taking offense at God. Taking offense at God is to state that one, You were not there and You should have been; or two, You were there, but You were misbehaving. You were not doing what You should have done. You would not have allowed this person to do what he did to me. You should have prevented it. If You did not prevent it, You should have punished him by now. Also, I will decide when he has been punished enough for me to let go of what he did. Maybe then I will forgive him. This is to say, God if You will do Your job, then I will do mine. You did not do Your job, God, of preventing it. But now if You will do Your job of punishing him sufficient to satisfy my appetite for punishment, then I will do my job of forgiving him. That continues the pattern, obviously, of judging God, which is the root of all sin ever since Adam and Eve. That is self worship, not God worship. Unforgiveness is to demand punishment for your transgressor while ravishing grace from God for you and your own shortcomings. It is to refuse to give that which we have freely received—namely grace. Matthew 10:8 – Freely you received, freely give.

We forgive not only so the one that we're holding the grudge against can live; we forgive so that we may fully live in relationship with our God and so that our relationships may live and thrive. Not to forgive is to refuse emotional health and to refuse healthy relationships because love is excluded. Not to forgive is to remain with simmering anger. Unfulfilled anger, over time, leads to bitterness. Where does bitterness lead? Hebrews 12:15 – The root of bitterness defiles many. Then you leave your friends and your family with only two poor choices. They can either avoid you so as not to be exposed to your bitterness or they can remain around you and be defiled. That's not an exact expression of love on your part to restrict their choices to those two. Part of anger related to unforgiveness is you get even angrier when those around you are not as angry as

you are about what someone did to you. That is self-centeredness to the extreme because it keeps all relationships revolving around you. Unforgiveness means that you have taken offense at the other person. But that offense is itself illegitimate. It may be diffuse evil, which is impersonal. If a person is a liar, he has lied to many and will probably lie to you. But you shouldn't take it personally since it has nothing to do with you. He does it to others too. So it's not personal, it is impersonal evil. So why should you take personal that which is impersonal by definition? Your response is to be what our response is always. In simple terms, I use PMT—pray, model, teach. You pray always. You model always and you teach as they have ears to hear.

The second possibility is that he reacted to something ungodly in you. That's the reason that we're to take the log out of our own eye first so that we can even see the speck in our brother's eye. Your proper response in that case is to be repentance, not offense. But you will not know that if your focus is unforgiveness about what he did to you and how obscure his vision is. The third possibility is, he's reacting to something godly in you. In that case, he is rejecting Christ, not rejecting you. So why should you take offense when his offense is at the spirit of Christ that is operating within you that led to the godly behavior? Jesus told us this in John 15:18 – If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. It will only hate us to the extent that we are like Him. So when someone takes offense at something Christlike in us, it is cause for joy that we are being transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Your transgressor may even have been seeking power over you. But I can guarantee you when you respond with unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, defiled relationships, and contemplation of revenge consuming your precious present, and removing you from all worship and love, you have given him power over you. Then you have submitted to him, not to God. You have submitted to the god of this world by responding according to the ways of this world rather than submitting to God and then reflecting Him as the way that this world desperately needs to see testimony of.

Unforgiveness is rebellion because it is to refuse to set your love upon the one who has violated you and to refuse to set your love upon the one whom God has set His own love upon. It is to pronounce as unlovable that which God loves. It is to choose to reveal self to that person and to others in observation rather than to reveal God to that person and to others in observation. I John 2:2 – And He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. Unforgiveness is to demand payment for that which Christ has already paid for in full because He paid for the sins of the whole world. Your transgressor may not have availed himself of that payment; but that doesn't negate that the payment was made. If that person were to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ does not have to go to the cross again to now pay for whatever sins this person had committed. He has already paid for the sins of the whole world. So how can we legitimately demand payment for that which Christ has already provided payment in full? He needs you to reveal Jesus to him and not your flesh to him. Perhaps you, by your forgiveness, can provoke him to say, would you explain to me how you forgive like that? That is not natural. There must be something supernatural.

So I need to ask myself, how can I be a living epistle and an earthen vessel that tells a true story of a forgiving God while displaying unforgiveness? How can I testify of a loving God while displaying bitterness and simmering anger? How can I testify of the grace of God while giving no grace to the one who offended me? If I do not freely give, it simply means that I still do not

know how freely I have received. It means that I still do not understand the Holiness of God. I still do not understand the magnitude of my sin compared to that Holy God. I still do not understand the magnitude of the payment made by Jesus Christ on my behalf on that cross. This is why I teach basic concepts of Christianity because wherever you see unforgiveness in churches, you are seeing exhibited a poor understanding of the Holiness of God, the Sin of Man, and the Cross of Christ. And that's why Paul would say repeatedly I know nothing, boast of nothing and teach nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We can have all the church programs we want, but if we don't get these basic concepts, if we don't put roots downward, we will bear no Christlike fruit upward.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.