

Hunters in Africa design monkey traps based on monkeys' behaviour patterns. Hunters would use glass jars with an opening slightly bigger than a monkey's hand. They would put food like a banana in them. When the monkey reaches inside the jar to grab the banana his hand forms a fist. The monkey can no longer withdraw his hand from the jar. The opening of the jar is not big enough to get a fist through. The only way to get free is to release the banana. The monkey refuses to release the banana and then gets caught by the hunters. The monkey has the means to escape by releasing the banana, but his desire to hold on allows the hunters to capture him.

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

How often do we say that we forgave someone? I think we might even believe we forgave. Then something happens that hurts us or makes us angry, and we call up all the things of the past again. With forgiveness we choose to never bring up the wrong doing again.

The truth is that forgiving is not so easy. We feel we have the right to be angry or get revenge.

Jesus showed us how to forgive. He never looked for revenge. Instead He prayed for those who persecuted them.

Psalm 103:11-13

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.

Luke 23:34

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

Forgiveness is not mere words, feelings, or emotions. Actions that follow forgiveness reveals the true hearts condition. The Greek word for forgiveness is "aphesis" which means release. When you forgive you choose to release the other person from debt or wrongdoing.

In the centre of the word forgiveness is the word give. What makes forgiveness difficult is that you are giving and not receiving. Despite the feeling of wanting to get, you choose to give instead. Instead of desiring to get justice or payback you choose to give what is due to you to the person who trespassed against you.

With forgiveness you trust that the person that you are setting free will not come back and hurt you again. Peter asked Jesus so how many times must I forgive, 7 times? Jesus answer indicated that the times we must forgive is countless.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

The only way to forgive is the way that Jesus forgives. He never brings up the past again. Jesus removed our trespasses as far as the East is from the West. They will never meet again.

The word "loose" means that something was tied. Someone that is tied up is a prisoner or slave. The person tied up does not have freedom. The person that will not loosen the other is also bound. The word says that if we cannot forgive then God cannot forgive us. As a result, we are bound by unforgiveness as well as the person we do not forgive.

Unforgiveness is an open door as we are left unprotected from God's forgiveness. Unforgiveness will destroy all parties involved. Jesus did not call us to destroy one another. He called us to be fishers of all men. We cannot be like Jesus if we carry unforgiveness in us.

Unforgiveness is a sin and will eat away at you like a cancer until it destroys you. Choose today to loosen and be set free from the things you are holding on to. Do not be a monkey, let the banana go so that you too do not get caught.