

# Good News for Families

September 2020

## Forgive Us Our Debts

*Debt* is such an ugly word. Most of us try to avoid debt, and there isn't much that's considered "good debt" outside of, perhaps, a home mortgage.

Owing on a debt—especially one of a sizable amount—can be overwhelming. Crushing, even. On the flip side, when someone owes us a significant amount of debt, the relationship can feel strained. It's an awkward place to be, and it always feels as though something just isn't right. We long for the debt to be paid—not just so that the money is replaced, but also so that the relationship is restored. More often, though, we just get angry. We are owed that money! What? Are we just supposed to forgive the debt in order to get the relationship back?

How about when our children or families are in need of some debt forgiveness? Not the money kind. Rather, when our loved ones sin against us over and over again—and often in the same ways—how are we supposed to handle it? Sometimes it can be difficult to know when it's time to shut down the forgiveness shop once and for all.

Until, of course, our Lord comes in with a clear word about forgiveness in the parable of the unforgiving servant. Remember that one? A servant owes his king a ridiculous amount of money but pleads for more time to pay the debt rather than be thrown into jail. The king has mercy on him and forgives the whole debt. This is when it gets interesting. The servant, instead of joyfully turning to his neighbors and likewise forgiving others their debts to him, is as unforgiving as he can be. Let's just say it doesn't end well for the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21–35).

We are so quick to slip into that pattern too, aren't we? We've been forgiven much—so much—and yet we still find it hard to forgive others for their slights against us. And those slights are quite minor compared to the great antagonism toward God that He's had to endure from us. Our Lord desires that we would joyfully turn to our neighbors—even those littlest neighbors in our own homes—and readily offer them the forgiveness that we ourselves have enjoyed, even though we haven't deserved it.


*Continued ...*

We should desire that kind of an attitude too, and so we're wise to pray for it in the Lord's Prayer.

In Luther's explanation of the Fifth Petition—"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"—we read and recite:

*What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would*

give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

So the jury is out on whether there's such a thing as "good debt"—but the verdict is in on forgiveness. We've been freed from our sins because our debt has been paid in full, completely forgiven through Christ, and now we get to offer forgiveness to others like there's no tomorrow. Thanks be to God. 

Author: Dcs. Jennifer L. Miller

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Small Catechism quotation is from Luther's Small Catechism, copyright © 1986 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

## Recommended Reading

### Forgiveness

#### Received from God, Extended to Others

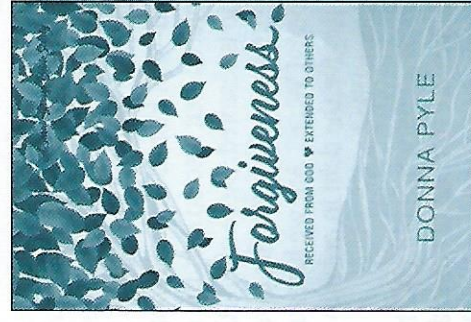
by Donna Pyle

Forgiveness can be one of the most difficult things to do. It's not always easy to forgive those around us, especially if their acts seem unforgivable. This temptation to keep forgiveness from others can grow roots deep in the human soul, resulting in bitterness that will eventually destroy from the inside out.

In this eight-session study, you will learn Christ's rich, life-altering teachings about forgiveness. Most important, you will learn how to forgive others just as Jesus forgave you.

204219

\$14.99



Available through your Christian bookstore or Concordia Publishing House at 1-800-325-3040. Shop online at [cph.org](http://cph.org).

© 2020 Concordia Publishing House • Your church's publisher • Visit us at [CPH.org](http://CPH.org)  
Printed in USA 851810



Concordia Publishing House  
3558 South Jefferson Ave.  
St. Louis, Missouri 63118-3968