

# Forgiveness

## **Scripture Focus:** Matthew 18:21-35

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.” Matthew 18:35

Christmas! A time of celebration. Yes, its gifts, food, family, love, lights, and memories. We complain of the commercialism, but we try hard to focus on the real meaning of Christmas. It is a challenge these days for a Christian family to celebrate the true joy of Christmas. But, each year, as we do, we experience so much pleasure in seeing our family turn to Christ and celebrate Him.

But why did He come to earth on that first Christmas? He came to give us a way to come to Him. To do that we had to be forgiven of our sins; which meant there had to be a sacrifice. Christ came to be that sacrifice so we could be forgiven. Forgiveness obviously holds great importance to God. He sacrificed His own Son to attain our forgiveness. When we realize just how important forgiveness is to Him we then began to see the importance of this month=s Scripture focus.

What a promise we find in these verses. Jesus came right out and told us that if we do not forgive then neither will he. This is a very strong statement, but very well worth our eternal life to consider. He did not say that we are to put the word “forgive” between the words “I” and “you.” That is not enough. I think he knew how easy it would be to say those words, and feel self-complacent once they were said, but not really mean them. In verse 35 He says, “...unless you forgive your brother from the heart.”

So, what is Jesus saying here? Does He actually mean we should forgive from the heart – in other words, actually mean it? Are we to do so when someone treats us badly, does us wrong, or uses us to their advantage and our disadvantage?

You be the judge. You read these verses and ask yourself if you can find any other answer but yes. Yes, He really means what He says. And He says if you do not forgive He will throw you into eternal hell. He is giving us fair and loving warning that He, as a just God, cannot forgive anyone who will not themselves forgive. Forgiveness is very important to Him.