



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START #282

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***Matt. 6:14,15- “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”***

Today’s verses come from the sermon on the mount. They are found in the section on prayer. Jesus gave a model prayer. This is often called the Lord’s prayer and that leaves the impression that Jesus prayed this prayer himself. Most likely not. He would not have had to ask for forgiveness since the book of Hebrews tells us that he was without sin. (Heb. 4:15) This is an example or a model of how to pray. It is short, God filled and touches upon the physical and spiritual side of man. Jesus offers only one further comment to the prayer and it is our verses today. In the prayer he said, “forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven others.”

Jesus shows that our forgiveness from God is conditional. It shows that the way we treat one another affects our relationship with God. And, it shows that God is aware of how we feel towards others. He knows if we have forgiven or not. Forgiveness is more than words, saying, “I’m sorry,” it is a change in relationship. Forgiveness is offered after someone has sinned against you. I cannot forgive someone for something they never did to me. Understand also, forgiving one another is not a replacement for God forgiving someone. A person should always seek forgiveness with God, first. Then, they should go about repairing a strained relationship with one another.

This is a radical and serious statement. If we don’t forgive others, God won’t forgive us. WOW! I’ve heard people in anger state, “I’ll never forgive you.” They better or else they don’t stand a chance with God. To forgive means to offer a second chance. It is to extend mercy and grace. Forgiveness isn’t deserved or earned. It isn’t fair—that’s the hard part of all of this. We know the expression, “if you do the crime, then you do the time.” Not so with forgiveness. You do the crime, but I forgive you. Why? First, forgiveness, is loved based. You don’t love the wrong or the hurt done, but the person. Second, to forgive is to release what they owe you and it releases you from being tied to the sin. You give it to God. It’s gone. Forgiveness is not the same as restitution. It takes only one to forgive, it takes two to have a restitution. Forgiveness means you don’t hold the wrong as a trump card that you can pull out any time and remind the person of the hurt that they did to you. If you have forgiven them, it’s gone. Forgiveness is costly. Forgiveness is hard. It goes against human nature. When hit, we want to hit back. Turning the cheek isn’t popular, never has been. Forgiveness costs the one who has been hurt. Someone owes. Someone needs to pay. Someone needs to make it right. Forgiveness is to release all of that. The debt is

paid. It is forgiven. It helps to think about how God forgives us. That is the model for us to follow. Look at the prodigal when he came home. His father forgave him. No threats. No sleeping in the barn until you've proven yourself. No secondary status. Forgiven and back at the table where he belonged.

Many of us carry the scars of serious pain that has been caused by the sins of others. Parents that have neglected the family. Emotional, physical and even sexual abuse, often caused by family members or family friends. A mate that walked away from the marriage. Kids that grow up and have nothing to do with their parents. Abuse at work, neighborhood battles, victims of crime, victims of a prejudiced heart and on and on we could go. The list is long. The hurt is painful and devastating. Scars carried for years. Some of these sins have forced us to alter our life. Divorce may force a stay at home mom to go back to work, possibly move out of the house into an apartment and struggle. Some of the scars are carried with us into marriages and they affect us the rest of our life. Forgive? Are you serious? Do you know what was done to me? How can I? Why should I? Never. Think again. Think about what our verse says. Think about what God has done in forgiving you.

Discipleship isn't putting sunshine stickers on a piece of paper. It calls for you to do what is not normal, expected or easy. It calls you to walk as Jesus walks. It calls you to do what only a follower of Jesus can. When all the people around you are screaming justice, hurt them back, Jesus says, forgive. A failure to forgive eats us up like a cancer. Our hearts become bitter. It changes us and dominates us. We think thoughts we shouldn't have. Let it go or be consumed by it. Let it go or let it destroy you. Let it go or God won't let you go!

Radical? Yes. Impossible? No. Will you do it? That's what you must decide.....

Roger Shouse