

WAR DEPARTMENT
BASIC TRAINING
The Alert Soldier
FORGIVENESS

“Forgiveness is man’s deepest need and God’s highest achievement.” Horace Bushnell

WARM UP

In a small town in New Zealand early in November of 1977 the owner of a dairy, Keith Stewart, was about to experience a dramatic life change. The events that were to follow soon became news around the whole world. Keith and his wife Rangī had a young six year old daughter, Lynley. That afternoon Lynley went missing. Late that evening her body was found under the school buildings across the road. She had been murdered. Later that week the police arrested a 13 year old boy who was later convicted of her murder. Keith and Rangī felt all the distress of any loving parent but Keith’s heart also went out to the father of the 13 year-old boy. With a friend and senior police officer he visited the boy’s home, went up to the father and said, “I am not here in anger. I am here to talk and to share some of the grief we both experience. I forgive your son.” Years later when the son was released Keith forgave him in person.

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BACKGROUND

The rabbis taught that people should forgive those who offend them – but only three times. Peter, trying to be especially generous, asked Jesus if seven (the perfect number)

was enough but

Jesus answered, “Seventy times seven,” meaning we shouldn’t even keep track of how many times we forgive someone.



READ Matthew 18:21-35



QUESTIONS FOR INTERACTION

1. What makes it so hard for people to forgive?

2. What enables people to forgive in the way Keith Stewart was able to?

CONSIDER THIS

“In our research, reliving a past hurt and holding a grudge prompted negative emotion and stress responses in sweat, heart rate and blood pressure. But when the same people forgave, focusing on their offender’s humanity, and wishing them genuine good, they experienced a positive emotion and reduced stress.” Dr Charlotte Witvliet

3. Why are we unable to receive God’s forgiveness if we are not forgiving ourselves?

4. What are the consequences in life when people are not forgiving?



WRAP-UP Discuss an experience you may have had when you have forgiven someone or they have forgiven you.



IT’S TIME FOR PRAYER

RESPONSE AS A PROMISE KEEPER

I will pray for those who have hurt me, seek them out and forgive them.

In the future I will try and be quick to forgive and bring life to others.