

One

The Fifth Beatitude is, “Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.”

To understand mercy, we must first grasp justice. Justice is giving to others what we owe them. Mercy gives to others more than we owe them.

Think of the parable of the unforgiving servant. Remember, he was the guy who owed the King an astronomical amount he could never pay back, but in his mercy the King forgave him. Then that guy went out and wouldn't forgive his fellow servant a tiny amount.

Remember what the King said to the unforgiving servant, “‘You wicked servant,’ he said ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?’ And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.”

Jesus ends the story and then states, “And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.”

Two

Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

If we want to receive the mercy of God then we must be merciful and forgiving to others.

“But” you may object, “what if someone has really hurt you?”

What are we really seeking by asking this question? Do we want permission to keep resenting the person who hurt you? Permission not to forgive, not to love? One of the most self-destructive feelings is resentment. Resentments toward a spouse, a parent, your boss or co-worker. Some person, institution, or principle with whom we feel hurt and we are angry.

In most cases, it was our self-worth, our finances or ambition or personal relationships (including sex) that were hurt or threatened. And so, we are resentful.

Resentment is the feeling of unhappiness, anger, and hurt at having been wronged and we are unable to let it go and forgive. This is deadly because unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person gets sick.

Three

With Jesus we can forgive, we can love, and we can change the feeling of resentment.

The first step is to resist the strong feeling of resentment. Don't give into it, don't act upon it. Then replace the strong feeling of resentment with the choice to forgive. Make the choice and say to God, "I forgive so and so."

If you can't, then do what Jesus did, turn to God the Father and say, "Father, forgive them, for they did not know what they were doing." By giving forgiveness you will eventually start to feel forgiveness. But more importantly, by giving forgiveness, by giving mercy, we will receive forgiveness and mercy from God.

Four

We need mental images to encourage forgiveness.

If a terminally ill friend offended us, we would say to ourselves, “Poor soul, look how they suffer. It’s no surprise they act this way. How can I be helpful to them? God save me from being angry with them.”

Okay, well, the person who hurt you, the person you resent is spiritually sick. In fact, we are all spiritually sick and we act unjustly toward one another, often without even realizing it.

That person is just like you: hurt, confused and afraid. The only difference between you and them is that they probably don’t resent you. So, we must ask God to help us show the same tolerance, mercy, and patience that we would cheerfully give a physically sick friend.

Or imagine this person might end up in hell, alone and abandoned. Do you want that? Or do you want to prevent it? Pray for them, forgive them, and be Christ to them and not Satan. Make the choice. Which one you will be?

Five

Recall that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “The measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

So imagine Jesus saying to you, “Listen, you have really hurt me; so I don’t think I can forgive you or love you or let you back into my life.” Because that is what we say to others through our resentment and unforgiveness.

Now there may be valid boundary issues. It might be best that the person who wronged you is not in your life. But you can still forgive them.

So the solution to resentment is four steps:

1. Surrender to God the feelings of resentment you are powerless to change on your own.
2. Then make the choice to forgive. Forgiveness is an action, not a feeling. You can do it even when you don't feel like it.
3. Then be grateful for the almost endless blessing you have. Jesus thank you for my life, for the sun, the rain, the food in my fridge, my home, on and on...
4. Lastly, get busy and do some good for the world and other people.

Surrender, forgiveness, gratitude and service conquer resentment.