

PREPLANNED FORGIVENESS — CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

INTRODUCTION

How can you have Christmas every day? How to make your Christmas dream come true. You ask, "What is my Christmas dream?" I think you will agree that Christmas is being together in special coziness or snugness. There is a deep joy, and an overshadowing spirit of love and forgiveness. You are enjoying your special home, the special decorations that you have put up. You are sitting close together; maybe the children are on your lap. You are singing some songs, and you feel like this is Heaven already. Arguments, difficulties, problems, they are all left behind. Cold feelings are left outside, and right now, you forget everything and you are just enjoying love. I think for many of us, this is what Christmas Day is like.

Why is it that way on Christmas Day? Because on Christmas Day what we actually do is imitate God. God overshadowed all of creation with His love and His forgiveness on that first Christmas Day. How did He do it? He did it through careful planning. His plan was to forgive yet unborn multitudes of people through His son, Jesus. He put that plan into action on that first Christmas Day.

So, we may imitate that plan. We not only may imitate that plan, but it is actually His desire that we do so. It is not just His desire, but more directly His command. He expects us to plan on forgiving other people. Hence the subtitle of this lecture; "**Preplanned Forgiveness.**"

I. DEFINITIONS

The result of preplanned forgiveness is having Christmas every day. Let us look at the definitions for forgiveness and preplanned forgiveness:

A. Forgiveness is:

- 1) to give up resentment against somebody.
- 2) to give up desire to punish.
- 3) to stop being angry with someone.
- 4) to pardon their wrongdoing.

Now that we have some sort of picture of forgiveness; let us go one step further and we will give the definition of preplanned forgiveness. **Preplanned forgiveness** -- what is that?

B. Preplanned Forgiveness is:

- 1) to realize that each individual is imperfect.
- 2) to plan ahead, to forgive that person when the need arises.

Is there a possibility your wife will make a mistake next week? What do you think? We know that mistakes will happen in the future. So, we should not go blindly into the future, and then when something happens, "Ah! Oh boy, what happened?!" You can go into the future with a plan.

II. OFFENSES MUST COME — MATTHEW 18:7

Matthew 18:7 says, *“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!”* Jesus said that it was necessary that offenses must come to us. Things that bother us, or things that hurt us, or cause damage to us; they must come. Why is it that these things happen to us? We are believers. We have a close relationship with Jesus Christ on a daily basis. We want only the very best for everybody, and still, these things must happen in our lives. There are three reasons why these offenses **must** come...

A. Too High Expectations. Romans 14:13

Romans 14:13 *“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.”* We are setting certain rules and certain standards for certain people. We say, “Well, he has already been a Christian for two years. How can he still do these things?” We set the standard that he should be living here on this higher level, but he is only living here on this lower level. So we are offended. We are disappointed. Why? Did he do something particularly bad? No, we have our standards too high.



We may say to our child, “What is the matter with you? You are fourteen years old already, and still you do these things!” Does that necessarily mean that there is something wrong with that child? Not necessarily. Perhaps you have an unrealistic standard, and the child cannot reach up to that high standard. Your child has 3’s on his report card, and you say, “Why do you not have 4’s and 5’s?” You are upset. You are angry. You run to the school to the teacher and ask, “What is the matter with my son? He is intelligent. He is normal. He does his best. Why did you not give him any 4’s or 5’s?” You want to shake the teacher. Why? Because your standards are way up there. Often we have standards that are unrealistic.

Many times we have double standards. We have one set of standards for unbelievers, and another set of standards for believers. If an unbeliever visits and shares some strawberries or something with you, you say, “Oh, that is wonderful! How nice!” And then you tell other people, “You know, our nice neighbors. They share strawberries, and they are not even believers! And yet they share and are so considerate.” But a week later, some believers come to share the same amount of strawberries. “Oh. Thank you, very nice. Bye.” Then when they go, you say to somebody else, “Well, you would think they have such a big garden and all, and yet they only brought just a little bit. And they know we have a very big family. And they did not bring any more than the neighbors did.” See, we have different standards. We are hurt and offended because of too high expectations.

B. Shortcomings

Your wife has just left the apartment, and she has asked you to take care of the children. Of course you know that is asking for disaster. The window is open, the wind blows, and you see the vase falling over. And you run over, and you just miss it. Your wife comes back, and there is a bunch of broken pieces there. And it was her favorite vase. And you say, “Well, I tried to reach it but I could not, my arm was too short.” And she would probably say something like, “Every time I leave, there is a problem.” You see, we cannot be in two places at the same time, like the risen Lord Jesus was. Maybe I am sick sometimes when I wish I was healthy and could do things. We make promises and simply cannot keep them, cannot do them. We are simply very limited beings. All of us simply have shortcomings.

C. Offenses Must Be Accepted

Offenses must be accepted, there is no other possibility. You did not get any more strawberries whether you were happy or unhappy about it. The vase held no more flowers after that. In my parent’s home when a little accident happened, everybody got angry, and they screamed and shouted. In my wife’s home, they had a much better Christian lifestyle. For example: If my mother-in-law’s a favorite serving plate was broken, they would not scream and get angry. They simply smiled and said, “Yes, I see, that was my favorite plate.”

I can remember at the beginning of our marriage when something happened my wife would always laugh, but I would be angry. But after a while, I began to think, “Who has the better lifestyle?” This is already gone,

so I assume she can laugh away her hurt, and I am feeling bad for maybe a whole day. If people cannot accept offenses, bad things start to happen as a result of it.

III. HANDLING THESE OFFENSES

We want to talk about handling these offenses. We are going to give you two columns: On the top left, you have the title "Negative Ways of Handling It." And on the right hand side of your page, you have, "Positive Ways of Handling Offenses." For each of these we will give you Bible verses. This gives you an opportunity to choose which reaction you want to have. It gives you an opportunity to pray about it, study the Bible, and make changes in your Christian lifestyle.

NEGATIVE RESPONSES	POSITIVE RESPONSES
<p>1. Holding a grudge</p> <p>After you have been offended, you can hold a grudge. Cain had such a response. He realized that he had made a mistake, not somebody else. He was offended and kept it. God came to Cain and He said, "Sin lies at the door of your heart." But Cain would not listen.</p> <p>Joseph's brothers held a grudge, and they entered into sin that followed them their whole lives. David's general Joab held a grudge also, and it was to his own hurt.</p>	<p>1. Forgiveness</p> <p>The opposite of holding a grudge is forgiveness. Luke 11:4 says, <i>"Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."</i></p> <p>Mark 11:25 says, <i>"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."</i></p> <p>Another reference is Luke 17:4, in which Christ was stressing the fact that we should forgive; <i>"If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."</i></p> <p>Colossians 3:13 says, <i>"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."</i></p> <p>Ephesians 4:32 also says, <i>"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."</i></p>
<p>2. Retaliation</p> <p>Proverbs 20:22 says, <i>"Do not say, 'I will pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you."</i></p> <p>Proverbs 24:29 says, <i>"Do not say, 'I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay that man for what he did.'"</i></p> <p>1 Peter 3:9 says, <i>"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with a blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."</i></p>	<p>2. Mercy</p> <p>Proverbs 3:3 says, <i>"Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."</i></p> <p>Proverbs 11: 17, <i>"A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself."</i></p> <p>Micah 6:8, <i>"He has showed you, O man, what is good, And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."</i></p> <p>Jesus taught the same things in Matthew 5:7, <i>"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."</i> and Luke 6:36, <i>"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."</i></p>
<p>3. Uncharitableness</p> <p>Isaiah 29:20-21 says, <i>"The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down -- those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice."</i></p>	<p>3. Duty To Enemies</p> <p>First look up in your Bibles, Exodus 23:4, <i>"If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him."</i></p> <p>Proverbs 24:17-18, <i>"Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice, or the Lord will see and disapprove"</i>.</p>

NEGATIVE RESPONSES	POSITIVE RESPONSES
<p>In 1 Timothy 6:3-4 Paul says that a false teacher, “is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind”.</p> <p>Matthew 7:4, “How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck of sawdust out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?”</p>	<p>Proverbs 25:21-22, “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” Paul quotes this verse in Romans 12:20.</p> <p>Matthew 5:44, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”.</p>
<p>4. Hatred</p> <p>Leviticus 19:17 says, “Do not hate your brother in your heart.”</p>	<p>4. Love</p> <p>Our reference is 1 Peter 1:22, “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.”</p>
<p>5. A Hasty Reply</p> <p>Prov.29:20</p> <p>“Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”</p> <p>Prov.20:3b “But every fool is quick to quarrel”.</p> <p>Prov.20:3a_“It is to a man’s honor to avoid strife”.</p>	<p>5. Forbearing</p> <p>Colossians 3:13, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”</p>
<p>6. Pride and Haughtiness</p> <p>Prov.26:12</p> <p>“Do you see a man wise in his Own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him”.</p> <p>Prov.18.12</p> <p>“Before his downfall a man’s heart is proud, But humility comes before honor”.</p>	<p>6. Meekness</p> <p>1 Peter 3:4, “Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”</p>
<p>7. Revenge</p> <p>Lev.19:18</p> <p>“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord”.</p> <p>Rom. 12:19</p> <p>“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”</p>	<p>7. Returning Good For Evil Rom. 12:21</p> <p>Exodus 23:5, “If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.”</p> <p>Luke 6:27&35, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great”.</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 5:15, “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”</p>

There are, of course, many other Bible studies that you can make, but this should give you a good list, in order to help you think about how to handle offenses better. Now that we have talked about offenses, we want to talk about the **REAL PROBLEM**.

IV.THE REAL PROBLEM — IMPROPERLY HANDLING OFFENSES

Now it gets interesting. You were offended, and you responded with one of the negative reactions from our chart. So now the offense is no longer in the error of the other person, but in your improper handling of the error.

If it was simply the other person offending you, it would be easy. You would sit down and say, "Thank you! When you come and ask for forgiveness, I will forgive you." And everything would be OK. But now that you have slammed the door and you hold the door handle in your hand, you have offended the other person. Now, if the other person does not apologize, and you do not apologize, you have two people who were friends and are now enemies.



When somebody offends you, and you have a Godly reaction, there is no problem. You forgive him and go on loving him. You act like nothing has happened. But, if because of their offense you make the mistake of responding negatively, then you have a **real** problem. Now your wife has to come to you and say, "I am sorry that I have offended you." And you have to say, "I am sorry I slammed the door, and knocked off the door handle." You also have to apologize, because your reaction was unholy. You were not prepared. You were thinking, "Life is just wonderful," and all of a sudden, WHAM! You were offended. But if you had just been careful, and looked in that person's eyes, and seen that person's face, then you would have thought, "Hmmm. Maybe today will be the day I will be offended." Then as you go home in the evening you may think, "I thought I would be offended today, but I was not."

V. THE SOLUTION — PREPLANNED FORGIVENESS

The solution to this problem is **preplanned** forgiveness. Can you possibly **pre-plan** to forgive someone ahead of time? Yes, you can! Example: "Let us see... next week, on the 5th of July, if my wife offends me, I shall be ready to forgive her." Yes that is what we are talking about.

I will share with you seven steps that I absolutely believe will help you to have **preplanned** forgiveness.

A. Realize no one is perfect

There was a boy who was interested in one of my daughters. And he told her she was perfect. So, I called this boy over and said, "I am sorry. I want to disillusion you. I have known this girl longer than you have. She is not perfect."

You need to realize that one morning somebody will get out of bed feeling bad. Or somebody may be sick, just when you want to have a picnic. If you realize that beforehand, you will not have to respond with, "Why now? Why not tomorrow? Why not yesterday? Why now?" When you realize that no one is perfect, you will be much less offended, much less hurt.

B. Realize that the offense will come only when you did not expect it

Now, if I expect Sasha to come late two more mornings and, sure enough, Sasha comes late, will I be angry? Will I be upset? Will I be offended? No, because I was expecting it. You will be offended only when you did not expect it. So, when somebody says something hurtful to you or something bad happens to you, and you feel bad, do not become angry with that person. Instead ask yourself, "Why did I not expect this? I knew it was going to happen sometime."

If you expect it, then it will not be an offense. It will only be an offense if you do not expect it. That is not my fault. That is your fault. I cannot help it that you did not expect it. I cannot help it if you expected a better lecture. That is your problem.

C. Have a counter plan of love

Especially in your family, or especially in your team that you are working very closely with. Examples:

- 1) My wife has a headache about every ten days and this is already the eighth day. So, probably very soon, she will have a headache.
- 2) Or, the children have been so good for a long time, and it is storming outside. Oh! Pretty soon maybe we are going to have a storm inside too, with the children.
- 3) Or, everything has been going so good; we have not broken a single plate or glass this month. And your husband says, "Wow! Oh, we did not..." and right then he drops it.

Whenever it has been going good; whenever you are just at the peak, you know it is going to change. A wise woman or man has a plan ready for when it is going to change. You have a plan for yourself, you have a plan for your spouse, and you have a plan for your children; so that when these things happen, you have yourself under control. And you will respond with a counter plan of love. And all of your family will be surprised at you. You are calm. You have yourself collected and under control. You can smile, and something good is happening. It is not a disaster because of your positive response. So instead of having a big disaster that could have ruined the whole day, it became a little five minute incident.

D. Realize you can forgive without being asked for it

Nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Only forgive when somebody asks you for forgiveness." Can you imagine Jesus saying somewhere in the New Testament, "Do not forgive if they do not ask for it! It is wrong. I forbid it." I think it would be very hard to imagine something like that. So, we can maintain a good attitude of forgiveness toward our boss, toward our coworker, or our family. We can be nice to them. Forgive them, without them having to ask.

E. Train yourself to put your counter plan into action at the time of the offense

Imagine your husband has done something terrible and a week later you say, "Here, honey, have some cake." This counter plan may not work. He may not connect the offense and the cake.

Let us say your husband was trying to help you, and being a husband, he was rather clumsy and he ruined your curtains. And as is custom, he expects you to stomp your feet, and slam the door, go in the bathroom and cry. But you had a counter plan of love. So you look at the curtains, and you say, "You know, we have had those curtains for ten years. They are really old. I think I can cut them into something for the smaller window, and we can begin to save some money to buy some new ones. He will probably stagger backwards thinking, "What is happening now? What was that you said?" Fifteen minutes later you say, "I think it is time for a break. How about you sit down, and we can have some coffee together and eat a piece of cake."

The whole incident is turned into good, an act of love. Your marriage is strengthened. However, if you do not do that at the time of offense, but instead make an ugly face, or say, "Well, OK then, all right, we will do it your way." Then you are going to have to say, "I am sorry, will you please forgive me?" because you are too late.



F. Recognize the moment of offense as an opportunity and not a duty

You can only do good when something bad has happened. If there is no mess, there is nothing to clean up. If the clothes are clean, you do not need to wash them. So every time there is a difficulty, there is an opportunity to practice your forgiveness.

G. Learn to welcome offenses

Galatians 6:2,10 *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."*

Example: "Ah! Here is another offense. Now I can show what kind of a Christian I am. Now I can do something positive. Now I can show I will not offend him like he offended me." An offense becomes an opportunity that you can learn to welcome.

H. Fruit of the Spirit

These responses require the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:23. One of those is self-control. The solution of preplanned forgiveness involves self-control. It involves understanding that difficulties and mistakes are going to arise, and at that very moment, you must have enough self-control not to have a natural reaction, but a **supernatural** reaction.

Your child will spill or drop things. Your husband will dirty his clothes. Your wife will sometimes have trouble with the meal when there are guests. The natural reaction is to have high blood pressure, adrenalin. You feel annoyed, frustrated. You want to vent your anger. These are natural reactions.

The supernatural reaction is to turn the other cheek. To go the second mile. To realize this is not the right time for me to say anything about this. Just be quiet and help my wife, or just help my team member, or just quietly clean up the mess from the children, and then tomorrow when the blood pressure is down, and the adrenalin is down, and I have slept well, then we will talk about it.

Am I right, that if you learn to do that, it could be Christmas **every** day?

The problem is often not the attacks we receive, but our negative reaction to the attacks. It is not the other person's offense, but your inner reaction, that spoils the day.

VI. REQUIREMENTS OF PREPLANNED FORGIVENESS

A. Preparedness / Readiness

Let us look at a few Bible verses:

Ecclesiastes 9:12 *"Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them."*

Hosea 10:12 *"Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you."*

I believe this is an area of unplowed ground in many of your lives. And I believe you need to start plowing up that ground and preparing the ground for preplanned forgiveness. I think it is time to seek the Lord about that. I believe He will shower you with blessings if you learn this method of preplanned forgiveness.

Matthew 24:43 *"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into."*

Of course he would have been ready if he had known. If some robbers are going to come to your house around two o'clock on a certain night, what would you do? You would lock the door, open the window, and look down the street, and say, "They are coming!" That is not the way it happens in real life. It happens when we are unprepared, and therefore we must learn to prepare for unprepared circumstances. Unexpected circumstances happen regularly in your life. So you need to develop a plan, and a mental attitude, of what your reaction is going to be at that moment.

B. Watchfulness

Luke 12:37 *"It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes."*

1 Thessalonians 5:5-6 *"You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled."*

In Matthew 26:41 Jesus said to the disciples, *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."* Did they do that? No! They slept. According to Thessalonians, they were like the unbelievers. They should have been watching and praying, and having self-control. So, what was their reaction to this bad event for which they were not prepared? There is only one word for their reaction. Panic. There is no other word. Some of them started running. Some of them clung to Jesus. Somebody said, "Well, I have a sword." One ran away naked without his clothes. Another one denied Jesus. The disciples were not expecting it, but Jesus knew it was coming. He was prepared for it. When they came, he asked them, "Who do you want?" And they did not say, "Well, we want you." The Bible says when he asked that question, "Who do you want?" they staggered back and fell to the ground. Jesus could have called ten thousand angels, but that was not His plan.

1 Corinthians 10:12, *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall!"*

1 Corinthians 16:13, *"Be on guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong."*

1 Peter 5:8, *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*

C. A renewed mind

The most well-known verse for that is of course Romans 12:2. It is so appropriate to the topic of preplanned forgiveness. The verse begins like this, “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.*” Brothers and sisters, do not do this any longer. It is a worldly pattern. It does not belong in your home. You need to see these changes made in the daily lives of your students.

And then it goes on to say, “...*but be transformed,*” Now, it is not a question. It is not if you want to. It is a statement of fact. It is an instruction. That is the way it should be. You should submit yourself to this teaching. How are you to be transformed? You probably say, “Well, with a clean heart. With repentance and forgiveness. Or by the washing of the blood of the Lamb.” That is not what it says. It says here, “...*by the renewing of your mind...*” You have a renewing of your mind. Going back to grade one, maybe to kindergarten, and beginning again. Begin afresh. Begin anew. I really do believe that it can be Christmas every day in your life.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to practice some of these principles in my life, and it has been a tremendous blessing to me. You must learn to live above your circumstances. Not being driven by the good or bad that happens. Do not be driven and controlled by your circumstances. Have that self-control. Recognize your circumstances and say, “Aha! But I am going to do like Jesus.” People who have done that have discovered that, amidst trauma in their lives, they can have tranquility.

Preplanned forgiveness works!

You can have Christmas **every** day!

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Using the chart under “Handling these Offenses” from the lecture choose two areas that you have a specific problem with. Copy the information from the chart about both the negative response and the positive response. Put it in a place where you will see it every day. Review them every day and ask the Lord to help you develop a positive response in place of the negative one

