

But when you pray . . .

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DAY 9—FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matt. 6:14, NKJV).

“I Didn’t Feel It”

She was old and had been an elder in my church for many years. She was now in the hospital. When I visited her, she told me, “Do not pray for me, for I am lost.” “Why would you say that?” I responded. “Pastor, I have sinned. I committed a big sin when I was young.” “Did you ask God for forgiveness?” “Oh, every day of my life, but He never forgave me.” “How do you know?” “Well,” she said, “I didn’t feel it.” We talked it through, and at the end of our conversation she had peace and joy.

How do you “feel” forgiveness? Is it a warm feeling in your body, or something cold on your right hand, or a tickling behind your neck? Do you smell it?

The Bible is clear. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV). It doesn’t say He forgives only small sins or a limited number of sins. It plainly says that if we confess our sins, He forgives them ALL. The condition: you must confess. The promise: God forgives. Do your part, and God will do His.

Forgiveness is not something that you can feel or prove scientifically. It is by faith. You take God’s Word for it and believe that God doesn’t lie. You cannot explain it, you don’t deserve it, but you know that God promised and His promises are 100 percent secure because they are based on His character and Word. Nothing is more secure than God’s Word.

When you confess, in that instant you are forgiven. Jesus already paid the price for your sin at the cross. He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, NKJV). His blood is sufficient, and in His blood you have redemption for all your sins (Eph. 1:7).

After you confess you need to exercise faith, to choose to believe that God does what He promised. “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:3, NIV). Remember, “the righteous will live by faith” (Rom. 1:17, NIV). As you believe, God works, and you are forgiven. Don’t try to explain it or deserve it. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8, NIV).

“Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 52). Forgiveness, righteousness, salvation—they are all received as a gift by faith.

“You are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. . . . If you believe the promise . . . God supplies the fact. . . . Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, “I believe it; it *is* so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 51).

As you fix your eyes on Jesus’ cross, you get a glimpse of that extreme manifestation of love: Jesus, Creator, the One who speaks and it happens, the One that the angels cover themselves before, the God of the Universe who came down and took human form. He, the Holy One, took your sins, and died for you personally. God died for you.

Fix your eyes on His cross. You will then notice that those who experience grace also share grace generously. Those who experience forgiveness, forgive. “The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 251).

Let’s pray together.

Prayer Time (30–45 Minutes)

All prayer groups have different ways of praying together. We encourage you to spend the next 30-45 minutes in united prayer, in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. We encourage short conversational prayers (1-3 sentences). This allows for more people to pray multiple times. Below are some examples of praying through Scripture based on the theme. You may pray through other passages also and include other subjects in your prayer time. See the Leader’s Guide and World Church Prayer Requests for prayer ideas.

Praying God’s Word — Matthew 6:14

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

“If you forgive men their trespasses”

Father, we confess that sometimes we don’t want to forgive. Release us from bitterness and resentment. Change our hearts and let Your grace flow through us to others. Transform our enemies into friends and unite our hearts in service for Your kingdom.

“Your heavenly Father will also forgive you”

Thank You, Lord, for the undeserved gifts of repentance and redemption. Sometimes we struggle to accept Your forgiveness and try to earn Your favor. Teach us to receive Your forgiveness joyfully and extend that grace to others.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Pray for regional and world church needs (see separate sheet with requests).

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God’s voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Amazing Grace (#108); Old Rugged Cross (#159); Redeemed (#337); Blessed Assurance (#462)

Other Songs: Grace That Is Greater; Behold, What Manner of Love; For God So Loved the World