



Introduction: How Often Should We Forgive?

One day, Peter approached Jesus with a question we have all asked at some point in our lives:

"Lord, if my brother sins against me, how many times must I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Jesus, with His infinite wisdom, answered:

"I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)

This response was not just a mathematical correction. Jesus was not setting an exact limit of 490 times for forgiveness, but rather teaching a much deeper truth: Christian forgiveness has no limit. It is not about keeping track of offenses but about loving without measure, as God loves us.

But how do we apply this in our daily lives? What does "seventy times seven" really mean? In this article, we will explore the theological depth of this teaching, its connection to God's mercy, and how we can live it in our relationships with others and with ourselves.

1. The Biblical Meaning of "Seventy Times Seven"

Jesus' response to Peter has a deeper significance than it seems. In the Bible, the number seven symbolizes completeness and divine perfection. Saying "seventy times seven" is a way of expressing an infinite amount—an unlimited forgiveness.

An Echo from the Old Testament

To better understand this phrase, we must look at Genesis. There, we find Lamech, a descendant of Cain, who says:

"If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy times seven." (Genesis 4:24)

Lamech represents the cycle of escalating violence that dominated humanity after original sin. His motto was unlimited vengeance. Jesus reverses this logic: instead of endless revenge, He calls us to endless forgiveness. Where the world responds with hatred, the Christian must



respond with mercy.

2. Forgiveness in the Christian Life: Why Is It So Hard?

Forgiveness is one of the most difficult teachings to live out. Sometimes we are hurt so deeply that we feel forgiveness is impossible. We tell ourselves:

- “I don’t want to be a hypocrite—I can’t forgive from my heart.”
- “It hurts too much; they don’t deserve it.”
- “What if they do it again?”

But this is where the Gospel challenges us. Jesus does not ask us to forgive because it is easy but because it is what truly sets us free.

Forgiving Is Not Forgetting—It Is Loving as God Loves

God does not have “amnesia” when He forgives us. He remembers our sins but does not use them against us. He gives us a new opportunity. Forgiving does not mean justifying evil or allowing ourselves to continue being hurt. It means choosing not to live bound by resentment.

Saint John Paul II, after suffering an assassination attempt in 1981, went to prison to visit his attacker, Mehmet Ali Agca, and forgave him. Not because the attack was just, but because he understood that God’s mercy was greater than any evil.

3. The Connection Between Forgiveness and God’s Mercy

In the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-35), Jesus explains how God forgives us and how we must forgive others. A king forgives his servant’s enormous debt, but that same servant refuses to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him by another person.

The lesson is clear: God has forgiven us an infinite debt (our sin), so how can we refuse to forgive others?



God's mercy has no limits. On the Cross, Jesus said:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

If He forgave even in the midst of extreme suffering, what excuse do we have not to forgive?

4. Practical Applications: How to Forgive "Seventy Times Seven"

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a decision. It is not about waiting until we "feel ready" but about starting to act.

a) Pray for the Person Who Hurt You

Jesus commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44). Praying for them helps us see them through God's eyes and softens our hearts.

b) Recognize That You Also Need Forgiveness

Sometimes we struggle to forgive because we forget how much we have been forgiven. Meditate on God's mercy and how He never denies you forgiveness.

c) Avoid Feeding Resentment

Every time we dwell on an offense and relive the pain, we bind ourselves more to the past. Choose to let go, entrusting the pain to God.

d) Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Confession is where we learn to receive and give forgiveness. There, God teaches us to be merciful as He is.

e) If Needed, Seek Spiritual or Psychological Help

Some wounds are so deep that we need guidance. A priest, spiritual director, or therapist can help us heal.



Conclusion: Forgiving as God Has Forgiven Us

“Seventy times seven” is not a number—it is a way of life. It is an invitation to reflect God’s mercy in a world that responds with hatred and revenge.

Forgiving does not mean that the pain disappears immediately, but it is the first step toward healing. God does not ask us to do the impossible—He gives us the grace to do it.

Today, I invite you to ask yourself:

- Is there someone I need to forgive?
- Am I holding onto resentments that rob me of peace?
- Have I experienced God’s forgiveness in my life?

If you have wounds that seem impossible to heal, remember Jesus’ words:

“For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

Dare to forgive. Not just seven times, but seventy times seven. Because in forgiveness, we find true freedom.