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## Realizing Our Limitations

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*"I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations." Ezekiel 36:26-27, NLT*

### **PEOPLE CHANGE WHEN: WE REALIZE OUR LIMITATIONS**

A mentor and friend of mine once asked me, "Are you free?" I have known Jesus and accepted His gift of salvation from a young age. So, yes? At the time my friend asked me this question though, I didn't feel very free. Bitterness, anger, hatred, and resentment had wound tight in my heart, keeping me shackled and captive.

Jesus gives a stern warning about forgiveness if we refuse to forgive others. When we don't forgive others we are denying our common ground as sinners in need of God's forgiveness. Coretta Scott King stated, "Hatred is too great a burden to bear. It injures the hater more than it injures the hated." The apostle Paul wrote, "Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you," (Ephesians 4:30-32, NLT).

How is it possible for us to do as Christ has commanded? When others have caused such severe hurt and pain in your life, how is it possible to forgive? The way to freedom is *not* to say, "I will \_\_\_\_ (i.e. forgive) out of my own power." The way to freedom is to say, "I can't." To realize the limitations of our humanity and to embrace the power of the Holy Spirit to transform.

Jesus encourages His disciples to pray this prayer:

"Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May Your Kingdom come soon. May Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one," (Matthew 6:9-13, NLT). In this prayer we see several comparisons:

- Our Father / the evil one
- The age to come / the present age
- The divine will / the human will

And then, sandwiched in the middle of this passage is the solution to our limitations: "Give us this day our daily bread." Gracious God, in our human limitation to forgive those who have hurt us, may Jesus, the Bread of Life, the One who has forgiven us of all our iniquities, be the provision we need. If your heart is full of pain, bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, or anything else that holds you shackled or captive today, I invite you to claim the words of Ezekiel 36:26-27 today and see how God works powerfully through your limitations.

### **REFLECTION:**

- Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to convict your heart of whatever may hold you captive today.

- Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, confess your sin, emotions, heart to God. It may even sound like, “God, I confess that I don’t want to forgive, I want justice.” “God, I hurt! I am filled with anger and pain!”
- Then, confess your limitations and pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit to fulfill what God said in Ezekiel 36:26-27.
- If God convicts you to reach out to someone to ask for their forgiveness or to give them forgiveness, do so with the understanding that it is not through your own power that you will be able to accomplish this, but only through the Holy Spirit.

#### **NEWS & RESOURCES:**

- Last Friday evening was the first of our short sermon series “Love is \_\_\_\_.” Join us this week for a powerful message by Pastor Joseph as we continue this series!
- Find a meaningful sense of belonging by joining a student or faculty/staff LifeGroup today: [click here.](#)
- If you are feeling anxious or have recently experienced loss or grief, call 423.236.2782 to talk to a counselor on campus! (This is a free service for Southern students.)
- **Talk** with Chaplain [Anna Bennett](#) or [Joseph Khabbaz](#) if you need someone to pray with or have a desire to grow spiritually.

Blessings