



The Lord's Forgiveness

Lesson Overview

1. True or False?

Reflect on statements about forgiveness in the light of New Church teachings.

2. Read

Evils of the spirit are like the diseases Jesus healed. We cannot receive the Lord's life fully until we have removed them, pp. 1-2.

3. Watch a Video

Watch *Repentance: Making Room for Goodness and Truth* (2min 52sec) at bit.ly/RepentanceGoodTrue. p.2

New Church Concept Lord's Forgiveness

Being Mercy itself, the Lord forgives everyone their sins. Nevertheless they do not come to be forgiven unless the person sincerely repents, refrains from evils, and after that leads a life of faith and charity, doing so to the end of his life. When this happens the person receives spiritual life from the Lord, called new life. *Arcana Coelestia* 9014

The Lord regards no one in any other way than from love and mercy. *Apocalypse Explained* 412.21

FaithBuilder 1 | Lesson 4 | The Lord

True or False?

Read each sentence. Decide whether it agrees or disagrees New Church teachings (is true or false). See bottom of the page for answers.

1. If we are hurt, the person who hurt us “owes” us an apology.
2. It is difficult to forgive someone who hurts us.
3. The Lord doesn't forgive us until we confess our sins (tell Him what we've done in prayer or confess to a minister) and ask His forgiveness.
4. The Lord never holds any of the hurtful things we do against us.
5. Saying, “I'm sorry” is more important for the person who has done something hurtful than for the person receiving the apology.

Read

When the Lord was on earth people believed there was a connection between the health of the body and the health of the spirit. They thought that that paralysis, blindness, lameness, etc. were caused by something a person—or a person's parents—had done. Notice what the disciples ask the Lord in the following story.

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned....” John 9:1-3

The Writings teach that there is a relationship between physical disease and diseases of the spirit—but that physical diseases are not caused by what a sick person has done *him or herself*. Since physical diseases “correspond” to diseases of the spirit, they come into being when people selfishly twist the Lord's inflowing life and love. As Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed for many years His words of healing connected the spirit with the body.

“Your sins are forgiven you. ...I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go your way....” (Mark 2:5, 11)

T or F answers: 1. F, 2. T, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T.

New Church Concept The Lord's Forgiveness

There are two duties that we must do after we have examined ourselves: prayer and confession. The prayer is to be that [the Lord] have mercy on us, give us the power to resist the evils that we have repented of, and provide us an inclination and desire to do what is good. The confession is to be that we see, recognize, and admit to our evils and that we are discovering that we are sinners. There is no need for us to list our sins before the Lord because we searched them out and saw them, and so they are present before the Lord because they are present before us.

There are two reasons why we should not beg the Lord to forgive our sins. The first is that sins are not abolished, they are just relocated within us. They are laid aside when after repentance we stop doing them and start a new life. This is because there are countless yearnings that stick to each evil in a kind of cluster; these can be dealt with in stages as we allow ourselves to be reformed and regenerated.

The second reason is that the Lord is mercy itself. Therefore he forgives the sins of all people. He blames no one for any sin. He says, "They do not know what they are doing" [Luke 23:34] (but this does not mean our sins are taken away altogether). How forgiving, then, is the Lord? See *True Christianity* 539

What kinds of disease make our spirits sick? What "sick" behaviors keep us from loving the Lord and others? The Ten Commandments provide a good list.

The first thing we must do to be healed of these spiritual diseases is to stop doing them. Watch the following video to see what happens when we do this.

Watch a Video

Watch *Repentance: Making Room for Goodness and Truth* (2min 52sec) online at bit.ly/RepentanceGoodTrue. (Enter bitly link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. What are little children like? Do they think of others without being reminded to or are they only capable of thinking about themselves? (see 0.07+ min in the video)
2. Why is it a big problem if people do not mature into spiritual beings who put others first? How do we see this in the world around us? Do *all* adults mature—or are there some who do not?
3. How does examining the ways in which we behave help us mature? (see 0.29+ min) Is this easy? What strategies might help you do this?
4. Can you think of another name for the "catalyst" the speaker mentioned? (see 0.34+ min)
5. John the Baptist was sent before the Lord. He came to preach the baptism of repentance (Luke 3:3). Why do you think this happened? Did people need to hear his message before they could receive the Lord? How is this like what we need in our lives?
6. Why is it impossible to hold the love of God and His goodness in your heart at the same time as holding the love of falsity? (see 1.17+ min).
7. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24) In what ways is this true of serving self and the Lord?

BARRIERS TO FORGIVENESS THAT MUST BE OVERCOME

The Lord forgives totally. This is hard to understand. When we sense the terrible nature of some evils in ourselves or in others, we tend to hold ourselves or the other person accountable for them. We are slow to forgive and forget. Part of this is understandable. Evil destroys trust. Can we trust ourselves not to do the same thing again? If we forgive others, will they hold what they've done lightly?

We must start with a forgiving attitude otherwise change will not be possible. We must remove false notions—e.g. that evil requires "payment" ("He must pay for what he's done") or is part of who we are ("It's his nature"). We must see ourselves from the Word—as the Lord does. He loves and forgives us. He gives the freedom and power to change—to discipline ourselves, to fight for a new way of thinking.

Adapted from *Finding Forgiveness* by Rev. Grant Odhner.