



GREATER THAN SERMON NOTES

Paul Valo
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OFTENTIMES AT CCO what has been selected to conclude worship, has in its lyrics a message which blends perfectly, emphatically, in bold, broad strokes, an interweaving of sorts, which reaches back to our arrival, to grab our attention and more importantly to get us moving God's Way in life:

[Verse 1]

There's a calm that covers me

When I kneel down at Your feet

It's a place of healing

It's a place where I find freedom

[Verse 2]

There's a place my eyes can't see

Where my spirit longs to be

It's a place of healing

It's a place I live in freedom

[Chorus]

I'm gonna lift my hands 'til I can reach heaven

I'm gonna shout Your name 'til the walls come falling down

I've come to worship, I've come to worship

[Verse 3]

There's a love that lives in me

For You, Lord, my Savior King

Who breaks the sin that's binding

And leads me to a place of freedom

[Chorus]

I'm gonna lift my hands 'til I can reach heaven

I'm gonna shout Your name 'til the walls come falling down

I've come to worship, I've come to worship

I'm gonna sing my song like I am unashamed

I'm gonna shout for joy at the mention of Your name

I've come to worship, I've come to worship

[Bridge]

There is no one that can

bring me peace

That can wash me clean like You, Lord

There is nothing in this world that can free me

You saved my soul

[Chorus]

I'm gonna lift my hands 'til I can reach heaven

I'm gonna shout Your name 'til the walls come falling down

I've come to worship, I've come to worship

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[Interlude]

[Chorus]

I'm gonna lift my hands 'til I can reach heaven

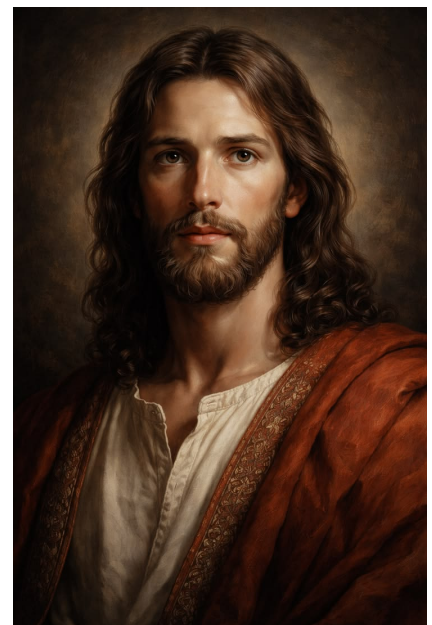
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I've come to worship, I've come to worship

I'm gonna sing my song like I am unashamed

I'm gonna shout for joy at the mention of Your name

I've come to worship I've come to worship



Well, there you have it! Lyrics which somehow joyfully reached back to our arrival in the sanctuary, lyrics which playfully *canopied* overhead, inhabiting every conversation, every note, every hope, dream, doubt, hesitancy, lyrics which paved the way to greater understanding and application of how to forgive, to reconcile, if possible, to set us free as we align our attitudes and perspective with God's Word, in order to live our lives God's Way, and to also know the amazing *freedom* God desires for each of us.

As we filled CCO's sanctuary, it was electric, not only as the music amped up, but in the sweet greeting of friends and meeting new ones. Something was afoot. We knew in our heart of hearts that it would be a glorious adventure today. And it was! The opening song provided a perfect *kickstart!*

Verse1

This is the day You made
So I'll rejoice and be glad
Rejoice and be glad in it
This is where I believe
You are more than enough
More than enough for me

When I'm standing in Your
presence
I have everything I need

Chorus

The joy of the Lord
The joy of the Lord is my
strength
The joy of the Lord
The joy of the Lord is my
strength
O my soul, bless His Name
All that is within me say
The joy of the Lord

The joy of the Lord is my
strength

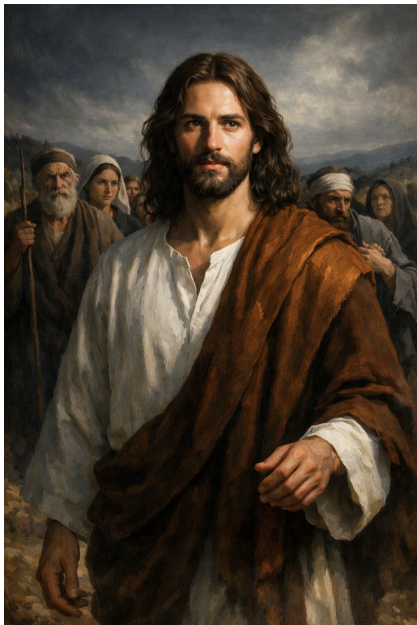
Verse2

Jesus, come what may
You are worthy of all, worthy
of all my praise

Prechorus

You are faithful to Your
promise
You are strong when I am
weak

Let it rise up like a river
Overflowing, Holy Spirit
Let it pour out with no limit
Overflowing, Holy Spirit



Pastor Marc had something to say: *The enemy comes to kill, lie and steal. Sisters and brothers, make sure you do not keep your finances away from God. Lord, I speak a blessing over our church. Reverse, I pray, all that the enemy tries to do, for we are your people, Lord Jesus, and we seek to do all things Your way. Teach us to be cheerful givers. Amen.* Immediately, lively music took over.

I pray into the atmosphere
Spirit of God, You're here
You have all authority
I pray over my heart and mind
I am healed by Your stripes
Your blood declares that I am free

In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray
Calling on the power of Heaven, I proclaim
Every weapon formed against me, must break
In the mighty name of Jesus

I draw a permanent boundary line
The enemy has no rights to come near my family
No scheme could ever undo God's plans
No matter the circumstance
The cross has sealed my destiny

In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray
Calling on the power of Heaven, I proclaim
Every weapon formed against me, must break
In the mighty name of Jesus

In the mighty name of Jesus, I know
All the power of fear and darkness, must go
He's every key to every victory, I hold
In the mighty name of Jesus

I will not fear, I will not fear
When the enemy comes near
On the door frame of my life
Is the blood of Jesus Christ
I will not fear, I will not fear
There's an army of angels here
I'm protected on all sides
By the blood of Jesus Christ

I will not fear, I will not fear
When the enemy comes near
On the door frame of my life
Is the name of Jesus Christ
I will not fear, I will not fear
There's an army of angels here

I'm protected on all sides
By the name of Jesus Christ

In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray
Calling on the power of Heaven, I proclaim
Every weapon formed against me, must break
In the mighty name of Jesus

In the mighty name of Jesus, I know
All the power of fear and darkness, must go
He's every key to every victory, I hold
In the mighty name of Jesus

It's in the mighty name of Jesus
It's in the mighty name of Jesus
It's in the mighty name of Jesus

Oh, the name of Jesus
There's no higher name
There's no greater name
It holds all authority
All powers
It's in His name
Oh, we're just beginnin' to lift up His name of
Jesus in this place

We declare You have the power, You have the
power
Oh
The name of Jesus
There's no other name
There's no other name

I will not fear, I will not fear
When the enemy comes near
On the door frame of my life
Is the blood of Jesus Christ
I will not fear, I will not fear
There's an army of angels here
I'm protected on all sides
By the blood of Jesus Christ I will not fear, I
will not fear
When the enemy comes near (oh)

He turns it around! God turns it around! Declare it! shouted Pastor Brooks, as an amazing backdrop of green and black patterns swept across the screen. Everything was coming together: color, design, quality, coupled with an awesome joy. We were ready for Pastor Paul to begin. The stage was set. It was going to be an adventure, an intimate one to be sure!

Are you glad you're here today? asked Pastor Paul, beaming. Applause broke out. *It's gonna rain tonight, so I guess some decided to stay home.* What a line! No excuses, right? Moving on. Our good pastor informed us that he will be speaking at Hope Church, 3032 Montecarlo Trail, Orlando, at 7pm, this Tuesday. Hope Church is focusing on revival, so they invited one of the best Spirit-filled pastors in town to preach. Praise God. *You love the Lord today?* Pastor Paul asked. Again, applause erupted.

God has a greater life for each of us but, unfortunately, we can miss this if we do not have good, healthy relationships. Jesus was asked: What matters the most? His reply follows.

Matthew 22:37-40 KJV

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38] This is the first and great commandment. [39] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [40] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40 MSG

Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

INSIGHT: In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus summarizes the entire Law and Prophets into two inseparable commandments: loving God with all one's heart, soul, and mind (*the greatest commandment*) and loving one's neighbor as oneself. These **commands** prioritize **vertical** love for God and **horizontal** love for others, forming the foundation of Christian ethics.

KEY Aspects of the Passage:

The Greatest Commandment (v. 37-38): Total, wholehearted devotion to God (heart, soul, and mind) is the primary commandment.

The Second Commandment (v. 39): Loving neighbors (including strangers and enemies) with the same care as oneself is deemed equally essential.

The Core Principle (v. 40): All other biblical laws and prophetic teachings "hang" on these two, meaning all biblical requirements are fulfilled through love.

Jesus provided this answer to the Pharisees to demonstrate that true faith is not just about adhering to rules, but about **relationships**—loving God and, by extension, loving others.

DEEPER DIVE: In Matthew 22:27-40, Jesus provides a concise summary of the entire Old Testament by identifying the two most important commandments. This teaching was given in response to a lawyer who asked which commandment in the law was the greatest.

The Two Greatest Commandments

Jesus identifies two primary commands that encompass all other religious and moral duties:

The First Commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This call for wholehearted devotion means prioritizing God above all else with every aspect of one's being—emotions, life, and intellect.

The Second Commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus explains that this is "like" the first, as genuine love for God is naturally expressed through how one treats others.

Key Significance

A Summary of Scripture: Jesus states that "all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments". This means that the entire Old Testament can be distilled into these core principles of love for God and love for others.

Internal Motivation vs. Legalism: By focusing on love, Jesus reorients faith from a rigid adherence to a list of rules to a living, relational expression of devotion.

Inseparability of Loves: Most commentaries emphasize that these two loves cannot be separated; one cannot truly claim to love God while failing to love their neighbor.

*So, Jesus was asked: **WHAT MATTERS THE MOST?** His reply was what some call the **Summary of the Law**. As we go through life we discover two kinds of people, wonderful or difficult. Wonderful people are refreshing and when they walk into the room, there is added light in their presence and conversation but when the difficult ones, you know, those who push every button in you and everybody else, we respond like rats leaping off the Titanic, people crowd over to the other side of the street or to the dark corners of the room, hopefully, successfully avoiding that difficult person! Jesus tells us to love them and shows us how to navigate through difficult situations and difficult people! With some, I'd rather go on a 3-day full fast than enter into any kind of conversation with them. It's just too hard. But Jesus has something to say about that perspective too. We can't just love the easy people to love, our friends, or sanctified ones. Nope. We've gotta love the others too. And we need to remember that difficult people are just a part of life. Every family has a difficult person or a crazy person; some families are comprised of all crazy people but that's another story for some other time. We find difficult people at work, at church, in our family or neighborhood. Can you think of a difficult person in your family for example? Several hands shot up. If you can't think of a difficult person, then, just maybe, well, you know, you just might be that difficult person, right? Remember, you can always **choose the spirit** you use as you deal with conflict. You have a choice as to whether you walk in the **FLESH** or in the **SPIRIT**. What will be your choice when you are dealing with conflict, asking for forgiveness or forgiving others? Let's look at all this, beginning with Luke.*

Luke 12:57-59 MSG

You don't have to be a genius to understand these things. Just use your common sense, the kind you'd use if, while being taken to court, you decided to settle up with your accuser on the way, knowing that if the case went to the judge you'd probably go to jail and pay every last penny of the fine. That's the kind of decision I'm asking you to make.

Luke 12:58 NIV

As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

Conflict is common in the world. Let's apply some *life skills* as we take a deeper look at how we need to successfully deal with conflict.

LIFE SKILLS: HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICT

1. CHECK YOURSELF FIRST BEFORE YOU TRY TO FIX OTHERS.

- Search yourself for errors, wrong attitudes or perspective(s).
- You may not always be right!
- In some circumstances you just might be that DIFFICULT person! Think long and hard about that!
- Re: conflict, ask yourself: ***WHAT IN ME NEEDS TO BE CORRECTED?***
- Maybe you do not see the whole picture!
- You could be wrong!
- Sometimes we REFUSE to change our position because we are *convinced* we are right! Drill down though on your perspective for a while!
- Spiritual maturity leaves space in any conflict to see that we ourselves might be wrong!
- Sometimes we experience fear in conflict because we think that if we give an inch, our opponent will take a mile, right?
- When in conflict, take a look at: your pride, your fear(s), your hurt inside.
- Proverbs 13:10 NIV
- ***Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.***
- Pride can in and of itself produce conflict.

INSIGHT: The Bible describes **PRIDE** as the *root* of all sin, defined by excessive self-love, arrogance, and a dangerous disregard for God and others. It is seen as a destructive, deceptive, and antisocial force that brings about a downfall (Proverbs 16:18) and sets itself against God.

KEY ways the Bible describes pride:

Rebellion Against God: Pride is characterized as a, "haughty" spirit that refuses to submit to God, effectively putting oneself in the place of God.

The Root of Sin: It is considered the foundation of all other sins, including envy, strife, and deceit.

A "Necklace" of Violence: Scripture depicts the wicked wearing pride as a "necklace" or a garment of violence (Psalm 73:6).

Deceptive: It causes individuals to have an exaggerated, false sense of self-importance and righteousness.

Antisocial and Argumentative: Pride is associated with a "froward" (perverse) mouth, complaining, and constant arguing.

The Opposite of Humility: It is the direct antithesis of the humility that Christ taught.

KEY Biblical Consequences and Warnings:

Destruction: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Divine Opposition: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Hatred by God: God specifically states that He hates "pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way" (Proverbs 8:13).

KEY Verses:

Proverbs 16:18: ***"Pride goes before destruction..."***

James 4:6: ***"...God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."***

Psalm 10:4: ***"In his pride, the wicked does not seek Him [God]..."***

CONSIDER THIS:

- Some people enter a room with a bucket of *water*.
- Other people enter the same room with a bucket of *gasoline*!
- Which bucket do you prefer to carry as you deal with conflict?
- Some unfortunately think to themselves:
- ***"Once I'm so far into argument, it's almost impossible to back out!"***
- Pride can make the conflict last forever.
- Confront yourself first as you deal with any conflict!
- Battle of McCoys & Hatfields over a disagreement regarding a hog, their battle lasted over 20 years and unfortunately involved the killing of 12 people, neither side believing they were ever wrong at all!

AS YOU DEAL WITH CONFLICT ASK YOURSELF

1. What part of this conflict is mine? (*ownership*)
2. Am I reacting in pride or responding with wisdom? (*choice*)
3. Is being right more important than being Christlike? (*motive*)

A HUMBLE SPIRIT MAKES RESOLUTION POSSIBLE.

2. MAKE PEACE QUICKLY BEFORE THE PROBLEM GROWS.

- Don't let the conflict fester.
- Don't rehearse what you are going to say!
- The enemy wants you to **constantly repeat** the argument in your head.
- As **unresolved** conflict which remains unchanged, the more expensive and heavy the conflict becomes!
- Conflict is often seen as a problem which remained unresolved too long.

EXAMPLE: Years ago a very sweet couple had an argument. They lived in a tiny four-room house. For 3 1/2 months the lady of the house remained absolutely silent, as she said to herself: Why, I'm right, of course. He's wrong and deserves the silent treatment! Actually, THE CONFLICT COULD HAVE BEEN CLEARED UP BY A HUMBLE CONVERSATION!

The enemy wants to delay our healing. We must swallow our pride and make the first attempt to resolve the conflict and, hopefully, reconcile.

EXAMPLE: At a church which was quite accustomed to conflict much of the time, the pastor seemed often to be busy at rallying the troops to his side as conflict broke out. We need to talk, he said somberly one day, to which I responded, O.K. Sure. We met at DD and he proceeded, There's been a conflict brewing between us. Sorry, I should have called you. As the elder, I should have called to initiate reconciliation. What a refreshing *breakthrough* this example provides. Think of the release of anger which happens at admitting one's own fault, making it possible to find reconciliation. This requires swallowing pride. This requires having a humble spirit. This requires placing the other person first, even if you are right!

- Important things to say when seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.
- **Can we talk about this?**
- **What I said was wrong.**
- **I'm so sorry for my part in this.**
- Admit: **I was wrong.**
- **We got off on the wrong foot, didn't we?**
- Don't say, "**if I hurt you, I'm sorry.**"
- Don't say, "**if you got hurt, I'm sorry.**"
- Say, and mean it, **Forgive me. Please.**
- **Help me understand better what I should do to make things better!**
(contributed by Pastor Marc)
- Live in peace with everyone.
- You are responsible for your side!

3. DO NOT LET THEIR BAD SPIRIT CREATE A BAD SPIRIT IN YOU!

- Romans 12:17 NIV
- **Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.**
- Conflict is two-sided.
- You are responsible for your obedience to God's Word.
- Our excuses: *But they said it first!*
- Go beyond excuses to secure forgiveness and, hopefully, reconciliation.
- When you respond IN THE FLESH you have *left out* the Lord.
- Ask: *Am I glorifying God in my response(s)?*
- Ask: *Am I working in any way to halt agitation?*
- Your actions and words must convey: **I am a child of God so I play by a different set of rules!**
- The enemy encourages us by twisting words and understandings.
- The enemy encourages us to at all costs insist on having the last word!
- The enemy always wants us to make matters worse. Remember that.
- Don't use sarcasm to match another's sarcasm.
- Don't use gossip to match another's gossip.
- Don't try to get in the last word!

EXAMPLE: Winston Churchill and Lady Astor had an ongoing conflict for years. Said she to Winston one day: ***If I were married to you, dear fellow, I'd fill your cup with poison!*** Mr. Churchill, without flinching, responded: ***If you were my wife, dear Lady, I'd drink it!*** Enough said, right? Forget the sarcasm. Seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If someone brings matches into the conflict, you absolutely do not have to provide gasoline!

Romans 12:19-20 NIV

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. [20] On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Did you know *burning coals* referenced in Romans were used for purification? Purification to burn off imperfections. Here's some insight.

INSIGHT: Romans 12:19-20 instructs believers to never take personal revenge, but to leave room for God's judgment, as He is the righteous judge who will repay. Instead of retaliation, believers are commanded to show kindness to enemies—feeding or helping them—which acts as "burning coals," overcoming evil with good and divine love.

KEY Themes:

Surrender Revenge to God: Because "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord, individuals should not take matters into their own hands, which are tainted by personal anger.

Active Kindness: Rather than merely doing nothing, Christians are encouraged to proactively help enemies in need, such as providing food or drink.

"Burning Coals": This metaphor implies that showing kindness to enemies can provoke them to shame or repentance, allowing God to work on their hearts while releasing the believer from bitterness.

This passage calls for overcoming natural urges for retribution by trusting in God's perfect justice and acting in love.

CONSIDER THIS:

- Slow down your response in conflict.
- Refuse to retaliate.
- Pray fervently about the conflict.
- Seek to walk in the Spirit, not your flesh!
- Don't say anything you can't take back!
- Step away from the conflict as you review everything in prayer.
- Don't lose your *witness*. Ever.
- Say less.

- Keep your spirit clean.
- Slow down your response(s).
- Don't send text(s) when angry.
- Delete wrong or hurtful words in text(s).
- Forgive freely.

4. FORGIVE FREELY EVEN WHEN RECONCILIATION ISN'T FULLY POSSIBLE.

- Lack of forgiveness can cause hurt and resentment which poisons you.
- Do not allow any conflict to define in any way, WHO you are.
- Some, unfortunately, build their identity around their wound(s).
- Avoid unforgiveness. Forgive freely as God would have it.
- Colossians 3:13 NIV
- ***Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.***

WHEN JESUS FORGIVES US, HE FORGIVES *ALL* OF OUR SINS!

- Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you!
- We build defensive walls which must be removed.
- We must trust God and His Ways.
- We are called to obey God's Word, every part of His Word!

EXAMPLE: Years ago, parents and their 12 year old daughter went camping. In the morning her parents discovered their daughter's tent slit open; their daughter was missing. Unfortunately, she had been kidnapped and brutally murdered. The mother, a devout Christian, said of the murderer, ***He used to call us and taunt us on the phone too, but we must forgive him. I forgive him. You see, the reason we must forgive is because we can't forget!*** What a witness to emulate.

Unforgiveness keeps you hostage to the perpetrator. Stop carrying unforgiveness and bitterness in your soul. It's your responsibility to stop collecting excuses for your unforgiveness. Forgiveness releases the other person so you don't become hostage to them. Do everything in your power to forgive.

FOUR THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN CONFLICT ARISES

1. Check yourself first for your part in any conflict. Be honest with self.
2. Move towards peace quickly.
3. Refuse to use a *bad spirit* as you deal with conflict.
4. Forgive, even if reconciliation doesn't seem possible.

With this, we segued into what had served as a profound lens throughout today's worship, the lyrics of **PLACE OF FREEDOM:**

There's a calm that covers me
When I kneel down at Your feet
It's a place of healing
It's a place where I find freedom

I'm gonna sing my song
Like I am unashamed
I'm gonna shout for joy
At the mention of your name
I've come to worship
I've come to worship

There's a place my eyes can't see
Where my spirit longs to be
It's a place of healing
It's a place I live in freedom

There is no one
That can bring me peace
That can wash me clean
Like you Lord
There is nothing
In this world that can free me
You saved my soul

I'm gonna lift my hands
'Til I can reach heaven
I'm gonna shout Your name
'Til the walls come falling down
I've come to worship
I've come to worship

I'm gonna lift my hands
'Til I can reach heaven
I'm gonna shout Your name
'Til the walls come falling down
I've come to worship
I've come to worship

There's a love that lives in me
For You Lord, my savior king
Breaks the sin that's binding
And leads me to a place of freedom

I'm gonna sing my song
Like I am unashamed
I'm gonna shout for joy
At the mention of your name
I've come to worship
I've come to worship

I'm gonna lift my hands
'Til I can reach heaven
I'm gonna shout Your name
'Til the walls come falling down
I've come to worship
I've come to worship

Pastor Paul lifted fervent prayer: *Fill us, Lord, with Your ability to forgive. Make us like You. We have come to a place of freedom in You. We choose to forgive others as You have forgiven us. We say I FORGIVE YOU to those who have offended us. Every day may we become more like You.* Pastor Brooks then added: *Praise Him today for freedom! I'm gonna lift my hands!*

INSIGHT: Christian forgiveness is the conscious, grace-driven decision to cancel the spiritual debt of an offender, mirroring God's unconditional forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ's sacrifice. It is an act of obedience that removes bitterness and seeks reconciliation, often requiring repentance, while freeing the victim from the burden of vengeance.

Key Aspects of Christian Forgiveness:

Rooted in Christ: Forgiveness is possible because Christ took on the guilt of human sin, allowing for the restoration of relationship with God and, subsequently, with others.

A Choice, Not a Feeling: It is a deliberate, proactive decision rather than a feeling.

Modeled on God's Grace: Christians are called to forgive because they have been forgiven, as described in Ephesians 4:32.

Unlimited Frequency: Jesus taught that forgiveness should be limitless, as shown in the "seventy times seven" instruction.

Difference Between Pardon and Reconciliation: While forgiveness is immediate for the wronged person, full reconciliation often depends on the offender's repentance.

Release of Vengeance: It involves relinquishing the right to punish the offender and letting go of bitterness, trusting in divine justice.

Not Tolerating Abuse: Forgiveness does not mean ignoring sin or ignoring dangerous situations, but rather resolving the sin, sometimes through healthy boundaries.

Key Scripture: "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13)

