***April 14, 2019***

***Today’s Lesson: Forgive One Another!***

**From Mike:**

What is legalism? Is it just loving laws and living by laws, or is it a state of mind? The Pharisees were condemned by Jesus for their legalistic hearts because it created self-righteousness and conceit. Legalistic thinking contributes to being judgmental towards others because it turns faith into comparison, competition, and pride. It is dangerous because, as Jesus warned in Matthew 23, it causes its proponents to miss the “weightier matters” of the spirit—the heart! Legalism, in its simplest form, is turning principles into rules. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, was a principle of rest, focus, and praising God. The legalists among the Jews spent centuries defining, directing, and itemizing what that meant—even to the point of how many steps one could take or pieces of firewood that could be carried. The legalism robbed them of the principle so much that they couldn’t even rejoice over a spectacular miracle of healing that came from God and totally changed a life!

That being said, don’t make the mistake of mixing simplicity with legalism. The things that God really wants and expects from His children are simple and clear. There is no need to drown them in legalism, but that doesn’t mean we can minimize them or spiritualize them to the point of being meaningless. In my opinion, we do that with love. It is a direct and simple command that transcends all other commands, covenants, and principles in the Bible. Love God, love one another, and love yourself. We love God by loving others and we love others as we love ourselves. Pretty simple, but also pretty—no, very—essential—and you know how much we love essentials!

I’ve shared all that to say this: God and Jesus are clear—repeatedly! If we want forgiveness from God, WE MUST FORGIVE ANYONE WHO HAS DONE ANYTHING TO US! It’s non-negotiable! It’s expected and required! Why? I’ll tell ya!

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