

Further Answers to Questions from Sermon
June 11/15
By Tony Anderson

- Is it possible that we can allow our gift(s) to become burdensome?

That is a good question. Spiritual gifts and talents are a blessing from the Lord to believers that allow us to be used by God to accomplish His Kingdom purposes in this world. So I don't think I would say the "gifts" are burdensome.

However, we serve the Lord in a fallen world and at times serving is hard. For example, I serve in the biblical counseling ministry. I have the joy of coming alongside people to help them solve real problems of life using God's Word. But that can be hard. Some who come for counseling are ensnared in their own sin or they are experiencing consequences of their sin. Others have suffered because they have been sinned against. Others experience illness or the death of a loved one as a result of living in this sin cursed world.

In such a role you do help carry others "burdens" as it says in Galatians 6:1-2: *"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens [emphasis added], and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. So again, I would not say the gift (which could be wisdom, discernment, encouragement, teaching) is the burden; rather it is fallen nature of man.*

I think we can also lose our biblical priorities by devoting so much time to using our gifts that we ignore other relationships such as a spouse or children or aging parents. A person might think, "If I don't serve in this ministry, God's work won't get done" so he devotes an inordinate amount of time and energy to the ministry. Yet he is convicted that he is ignoring his other biblical responsibilities. Thus, he experiences a "burden".

- A friend is struggling with extending forgiveness to a relative. The relative has not repented or asked for forgiveness. She makes the point that we have to repent with Jesus and ask his forgiveness for sins. Why would her relative not have to come to her that way to receive forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a very important issue in our Christian faith. It is one of the things that distinguishes us from non-believers. The forgiveness we have received. I would encourage you to watch a prior message on this issue which you can find here:

<https://vimeo.com/345513902>

The issue of forgiveness is important for both the offender (the one who sinned) and the offended (the one who was sinned against). As Christ-followers we have received forgiveness for our sins, and as such we are commanded to forgive others.

Ephesians 4:32 states: *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”* I also encourage you to read the parable of two servants in Matthew 18: 21-35.

Jesus tells believers in Mark 11:25: *“Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.”* Notice there is no condition precedent to the command to forgive. We are to forgive “anyone” we have anything against. When we do this, we surrender the debt that the offender created by sinning against us to God and trust God to judge and work in the life of the offender, which He promises to do. Granting forgiveness in this context is for the good of the offended as it helps her avoid bitterness. However, it does not mean the offender has received forgiveness.

In fact in order to receive forgiveness, the offender must confess her sin (agree with God that it was sin) and repent. 1 John 1:9 says: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

And if we have sinned against another we are to go confess our sin to her and ask forgiveness. See Matthew 5:23-24.

So in your question, your friend should forgive the relative per Mark 11:25 even if the relative does not ask. The relative should seek God’s forgiveness and your friend’s forgiveness.

But there is more! In Luke 17:3 Jesus says: *“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”* This is actually a command to the offended Christian that is primarily for the benefit of the offender. Remember, based upon Mark 11:25 above we are to forgive anyone even if they don’t ask. Here, if the offender is a Christian (“brother”), the offended is to go to her and humbly share the facts as to why she believes the offending Christian has sinned against her and encourage her to repent. If she does repent, then the offended can “announce” the forgiveness she has (or should have) granted previously per Mark 11:25 and they are reconciled. If the offender refuses to repent, then others may need to be brought in, but the offended is still to love her, bless her and do good to her (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27).

- How do I think about family member who knows Truth but isn't walking with the Lord? According to today's scripture she hasn't been chosen.

As I answer this question, let’s remember that a person who has not placed faith in Christ as of today, may do so later. In which case, they have been chosen.

The situation you describe is not uncommon. A person may “know” what the Bible says, but that person has not placed faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. That person is not saved, but he may subsequently be saved.

On the other hand, one who is saved (thus chosen), will produce good works consistent with his Salvation. Ephesians 2:8-10 says: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

Sadly, all of us as believers have disobeyed the Lord. So if a person is claiming to be a Christian but is not walking in obedience then it is possible the person is deceived and is not truly saved (currently). Or it is possible that he is saved but is quenching the Holy Spirit within and walking in disobedience. It is not possible for us to know for sure if someone else is saved. Only the Lord knows that person’s heart.

The Bible encourages us to examine our own hearts to see if we are in the faith. 2 Corinthians 13:3 says: *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, which Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?* In fact the book of 1 John was written to believers to help us examine our heart and to have assurance that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

- Is it possible to be SKILLED in an area like Counseling or teaching..., but not be gifted?

I think it is important to start with the fact that God gives all Christians everything they need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). So we all have the equipping we need to obey the Scriptures and live for the glory of God. This includes all we need to make disciples, to love another, to encourage one another, to bear one another’s burdens, to admonish one another etc. I think as we do this more and more we can become better at such things and thus more skilled.

I also think we can have a spiritual gift and then get better (more skilled) at using our gift by diligently using our gift (2 Timothy 2:15).