

June 2017



Forgiven to Forgive

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.” – Ephesians 4:32

When I listen to the loudest voices in our nation, I hear blame, accusations and angry words. The accepted norm in elevating one’s personal status is to denigrate someone else’s personal worth and integrity. The words, “I’m responsible,” “I made a mistake,” and “I forgive you” seem to be anathema; to speak them would reveal weakness and vulnerability that is simply not acceptable in the power struggles that rule our public (and private) lives.

I suspect Jesus would cause quite a stir if He walked the streets today with teachings such as those in Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” The reality is that Jesus does walk the streets today. He’s embodied in those who claim the name of Christian. And Jesus’ words clearly indicate that He calls His followers to higher ways of thinking and living than accepted societal norms.

In Matthew 18, Peter asked Jesus a forgiveness question. I am certain Peter thought he was doing well to exceed the acceptable forgiveness standard of his day. But Jesus operates on a higher level than us– “Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’” Jesus’ aim is clear; forgiveness should be a hallmark of those who follow Him and represent His name.

I have an olivewood carving in my office. I purchased it in the Holy Land a number of years ago. It depicts Jesus washing Peter’s feet on the night before Jesus was arrested. This visual reminds me of something important God taught me through that night’s events. Jesus was the only sinless person in the room. But there He was with a water basin, measuring out grace to His disciples by taking on a servant’s menial task.

There are many lessons in this story, but God planted this one deep in my heart – Jesus offers mercy and forgiveness to us before we even know we need it, before we are even capable of asking for it. And when our pride is broken and we choose to receive Jesus’ offer, just as Peter later did that night by the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus scoops up handfuls of grace and mercy and

washes away our sin. He forgives us. Then He calls us to follow His example, and because we have been forgiven, and because Jesus lives in us through the person and presence of the Holy Spirit, we can forgive others.

Paul challenges us with that truth in Ephesians 4:32—"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." My experience has been that relationships aren't usually healed because the guilty are punished, but because the innocent are merciful and forgiving.

You may think, "I could never do that, the hurt is so deep, the wounds are so many." Could I suggest that if this is your attitude, you may be looking at the wrong person? Jesus said to His disciples, you can look at Me and find your model – John 13:14-15 – "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

The key to being like Jesus is moving our gaze away from those who may have hurt us and fixing it on the One who has saved us and forgiven us. Because in spite of the voices that seem the loudest, there are places in our lives that can only be healed when we choose to pull out a bowl of forgiveness and grace.

-By Rev. Rick Fisher, VP of BMI



Rick Fisher Leads Study of *Flickering Lamps* with SC Pastors

During the first five months of 2017, Rick Fisher led three groups of pastors in South Carolina through the book *Flickering Lamps: Christ and His Church*. The pastors met monthly for discussion and utilized the accompanying DVD set.

"In a word I have found *Flickering Lamps* compelling. Another word is 'challenging,'" one pastor said. "So much of what Henry and Richard have had to say is something I can identify with personally. I am, in fact, in my third read-through. This book seems to be reigniting some missions fires in the life of our church. Thank you for leading us through it."

If you are interested in using the *Flickering Lamps* material in your



Three Generations of Blackabys Minister at The Cove

May 24-26, three generations of Blackabys spoke at the Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove in Asheville, NC, on *Living Out of the Overflow*, a new book by Richard Blackaby.

At the close of each evening session, Henry and Marilyn Blackaby sat by the famous Cove fireplace in the lobby and spoke with people about how God was working in their lives.

"It is a supreme joy for me to be able to speak with my oldest son, Richard, and my oldest grandchild, Mike, each year at the Cove," Henry said. "It is also my privilege to hear the wonderful stories of how God is at work in ordinary people's lives."

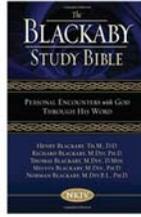
church or association, contact Rick Fisher at rfisher@blackaby.org or 864-380-1089.

The three Blackabys will be returning to the Cove for another conference in November 2018.



Richard Blackaby speaks to disaster relief workers

May 10-12, Dr. Richard Blackaby spoke at two events at The Cove. The first event was for Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief staff and volunteers. Blackaby then spoke to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's Rapid Response team. These chaplains respond to all manner of crises, including terrorist attacks such as the recent incidents in Manchester and on London Bridge.



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Richard Blackaby teaches leadership in Canada

From May 29-June 2, Dr. Richard Blackaby co-taught a class on leadership with seminary president, Dr. Rob Blackaby, at the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada. Richard Blackaby led the school for 13 years before becoming BMI president. Students traveled from as far away as Nova Scotia to attend and their response to the material was enthusiastic.