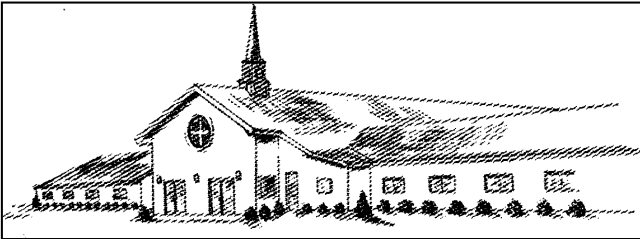


The Caller

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Confidence Corner John F. Board

In this week's *Confidence Corner* we want to examine a thought regarding God's forgiveness. Some people think that God extends unconditional for-

giveness and that we should do so as well. The problem lies with a misunderstanding of Scripture.

One rule of biblical interpretation is that we ought to always look at clear passages of Scripture to help us determine more difficult concepts found on the pages of Scripture. One such very clear passage regarding the biblical teaching on forgiveness is found in Luke 17:3. It reads, "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him." Did you catch that, God does not teach us to unconditionally forgive someone. He adds the conditional stipulation that if they want to be forgiven, they must repent.

Don't get me wrong; we must have the attitude and desire to always look to forgive someone who has sinned against us. But if we do not rebuke them and allow them to repent, they very well may never realize they have sin in their life that separates them from God. If we point out their sin, we can save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sin!

If you think about it, sin cost God too much for us to take it lightly. We must realize the serious nature of sin and do all we can to avoid sin in our lives. We also must help others to see sin in their life so that they too can turn away from it and turn to God.

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Into the Wild is a book that follows a man in his journey to Alaska, living off the grid. After graduating from Emory University, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandons his possessions, gives his entire \$24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhikes to Alaska to live in the wilderness. Along the way, Christopher encounters a series of characters that shape his life. McCandless ultimately ends up losing his life in the Alaskan wilderness to starvation and the elements in the wilderness. What makes his story so inspiring and thought provoking was the fact that he was willing to leave everything behind. He left the comfort of his everyday life, where he probably would have made pretty good money, to live a different type of life. He chose to live life without knowing exactly what the next day may bring. He did what many humans are not willing to do. He didn't want to be comfortable or continue living life the same way everyday.

In Mark 10 Jesus encounters a man who wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. After being told to sell everything he owned and follow Jesus he was saddened. He was comfortable in the riches that he had.

In two different books we read of two different people. In one we read of one man who was willing to leave everything behind in order to live freely in the wilderness. In the other book we read of a man who was unwilling to leave anything behind in order to live free from sin in Christ. What are you willing to leave in the rear view mirror in order to follow Christ?

**Mitchell's
Weekly
Manna
Mitchell Lockhart**

Sunday's Sermons:

**A.M. — For Sinners' Gain
Romans 5:7-11**

**P.M. — Daniel
Daniel 1:1-7**

The Forgiveness of God

*As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12*

It doesn't matter how far you go to the east; you will never arrive where west begins because by definition west is the opposite of east. The two never meet. They never will meet and never could meet because they are defined as opposites. To remove our sins "as far as the east is from the west" is a figurative way that the Psalmist conveys the extent of God's removal of our sins. That is the forgiveness God has granted us.

When we see pictures of the forgiveness of God the Father in Scripture, there is a sense in which He longs to forgive. We are told in 2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to you-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." When we read various parables we see a God who desires to forgive.

In Matthew 18:21ff, a picture is portrayed of a God who is willing to forgive a debt that could have never been repaid. A man with such a debt pled to his king and the king (representative of God) forgave him the debt. It is unfathomable to think of the feelings such a release of debt should bring. Oddly in this man it brought about selfishness. He went out to find a fellow servant who owed him money and demanded that servant pay the small debt he owed the fellow servant. It is difficult to read the text in Matthew without feeling a sense of shock.

In Luke 15, in the third part of the message regarding those who were lost, a father is pictured (representing God) who longs to run to his child who is returning home after a rebellious streak had led him astray. The father is pictured as one who offers full forgiveness and restitution.

"As far as the east is from the west" is the extent the Psalmist has depicted that God has removed our sins. This thought conveys not only "how far" God has removed our sins, but also that our sins have been taken away. Our sins have been taken to a place of non-existence since there is no "point" or "distance" that we could say is where the east is removed from the west. This language seems to convey the sense that God will remember our sins no more.

When we speak of God's amazing grace, not only must we remember that he longs to remove our sin and does so, we must also remember the extent of His love that led to this amazing blessing—the gift of His only begotten Son! Truly, how deep the Father's love for us!

*John F. Board
Elizabethtown, KY*