



Forgiving One Another

Forgiveness is one of the most beautiful words in the human vocabulary. How much pain and unhappy consequences could be avoided if we all learned the meaning of this word and practiced it. Forgiveness has been defined as the process of choosing to pardon an offender without demanding punishment or retribution.

1. When someone has hurt us, or sinned against us, what are some of the responses we so often make?

Revenge, or harboring anger or hate. We often turn away and do not talk to them, hoping it will just “go away.” Or we tell others about our hurt (gossip — slander). Sometimes we fight back with evil words to the person, etc...

2. How can we know if these responses are right?

We find out by checking them with what God says in His Word - the Bible.

3. What does Jesus say we are to do when a believer sins against us?

Believe it or not, forgiveness is not the first action we are to take. Read Luke 17: 3.

Jesus says, “Rebuke them” - confront them with what they are doing and how it is affecting you and that it is not acceptable behavior. This must be done kindly and graciously in love . (Ephesians 4:1, 2, 15, 16: 5:2)

4. Why did Jesus say to rebuke them, first?

Because part of the process of forgiveness is repentance, which means owning up to what we have done and accepting responsibility for it. Repentance is a positive change of attitude and behavior. It is more than just saying “sorry!”

5. How are we to respond to a person who repents of hurting us?

We are to forgive them.

6. How often are we to forgive them?

Read what Jesus says in Luke 17:4

7. Why would Jesus tell us to keep on forgiving?

Why do you think we should continue to forgive someone who comes back many times in one day with a repentant heart? Look at Colossians 3:13.

Because God forgives that way. He is the model of how to forgive and what our life should be.

8. Sometimes, it’s difficult to forgive.

We often prefer to hold onto bitterness. Or worse yet, we use that bitterness to slander the one who has hurt us. We hold tightly to our grudges and the blame game. This increases conflict and produces roadblocks in the way of reconciliation and peace. Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and see what the Holy Spirit says through Paul about the wrongful ways that we respond to one another.

From Ephesians 4:31-32, we learn that we are to get rid of ALL bitterness, angry outbursts, harsh words, shouting, fighting and slander. Instead, replace it with kindness and compassion, lovingly forgiving one another, remembering always and demonstrating always the forgiveness that we have been given in Christ.

9. To support the former thought, move ahead one line and read Ephesians 5:1-2. What is its message?

As Christians we are to be Christ-like. He demonstrated God’s forgiveness and in this verse we are told to be imitators of God and show His forgiveness and love to others.

10. The role of Love in Forgiveness

In his fantastic chapter on love, the apostle Paul says something that exudes forgiveness with every word. Read 1Corinthians 13:5. What is it about love that equates with forgiveness here?

“Love keeps no record of wrongs.” To love as a Christian also means to forgive as God forgives. God says, “He remembers our sins no more.” That means, He doesn’t bring them up again, to use them against us.

In his book, **“I Should Forgive But...”**, Dr. Chuck Lynch says, A past that is not processed is always present in one form or another. Problems that are not worked out will be acted out, and that acting out is often more painful than working through the issue, both for the one doing it and for those around

them. Continually “stuffing down” old hurts inside of us just builds up bitterness.

However, the number one roadblock to forgiveness is not stubbornness, as it appears to be on the surface, but *ignorance*. The biggest confusion in this regard is the distinction between what it actually *means* to forgive, and what the *results* of doing so are.

For example, many say that forgiveness means “*I can now stand to be around someone who has hurt me.*” To them, that is what forgiveness *means*. But “*standing to be around someone who hurt me*” is a result of forgiveness.

“*I don’t get upset anymore when I think of them*” is another “definition” given. But again, that effect is not forgiveness - it is another result, or benefit, received after forgiveness has been granted.” © “*I Should Forgive But...*” - Dr. Chuck Lynch - Word

It will help us to consider what forgiveness is NOT and then look at how forgiveness actually works in daily life.

WHAT FORGIVENESS DOES NOT MEAN

1. That I will, or have to, forget the hurt done to me
2. That I am overlooking the offense and saying, “It’s okay; it doesn’t matter”
3. That the offender will escape all consequences
4. That I will automatically be reconciled with the person who has hurt me
5. That I have to allow people in my life to continue hurting me because I am willing to forgive
6. That the offender does not have to apologize or make restitution

7. That I have to spend time with people who refuse to acknowledge that what they are doing, is hurting me

HOW THEN DO WE FORGIVE?

How does forgiveness work?

1. Learn to recognize when you are feeling hurt. You may feel angry - because anger often follows hurt.
2. Identify what specifically was said or done that hurt you.
3. Go and speak to the person/s who has hurt you. Let them know you have been hurt.
4. If they are sensitive Christians they will feel sorry, apologize and be willing to change their behavior.
5. You are to forgive them and say so.
6. If they are not repentant, you are to forgive them in your heart, and release them to God to deal with them. But you may need to take steps to correct the circumstances that are causing you difficulties. It may mean certain location or relationship changes. There may be loss of privileges and benefits.
7. You will need to pray for resolution of the situation and reconciliation where possible.
8. We also need to be sure we are being obedient to other Scriptures that address interpersonal relationships, and are living in a Christ-like way in all situations.

Let us endeavor to put our faith into practice and do what Jesus asks us to do. When we forgive others, we can experience peace, reconciliation, love and freedom. We will feel closer to God and to one another (Luke 6:37). “Forgive and you will be forgiven.”

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