

Forgiving Each Other

...“*And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop ~ Leave it, let it go ~ in order that your Father, Who is in heaven, may also forgive you your (own) failings and shortcomings and let them drop.*” Mark 11:25 (AMP)

The Message paraphrase of the Bible reads “*When you assume the posture of prayer, remember that it’s not all asking. If you have anything against someone, forgive ~ only then will your heavenly Father be inclined to wipe your slate clean of sins.*” There are a number of passages in the Bible that show clearly **forgiveness is a commandment and a choice, not a suggestion**. The believer in Christ comes face to face with the fact that his own forgiveness is directly linked to his willingness to forgive others. Unforgiveness clogs the channel of blessings that flow to us from our heavenly Father. Walking in unforgiveness gives Satan a stronghold in our lives and is one reason our prayers are not answered.

Jesus set the profound example of forgiveness as He hung on the cross. He had been beaten, His side pierced, a crown of thorns crushed into His head. He experienced physical thirst, but more agonizing was His spiritual thirst as He cried, “*My God, my God, why have you abandoned me ~ leaving me helpless, forsaking and failing me in my need?*” Matthew 27:46B (AMP) In the midst of His extreme agony He chose to cry “*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*” Luke 23:34 (NIV)

The instructions from the Word of God are clear. We must come in line with the truth of God’s Word. We must not allow ourselves to restrict the flow of God’s presence by harboring unforgiveness.

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we need to understand **forgiving others is a decision we can choose to make. It is not an emotion**. It is a decision where we choose not to give offense a place between ourselves and others. A decision not to pull it out at convenient times as a reminder of another’s weakness, fallibility or inferior position.

Once we choose to walk in God’s commandment to forgive and to allow His love to flow out of us to others we need to ask God to bring our emotions in line. We must choose to ignore any “temper fits” coming out of our emotions. We must yield to the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us. All of us have experienced how inadequate human love is. It always seems to fall short at some point! We need to ask the Father to fill our hearts with His love for mankind. With this infilling we start to grow into the 1 Corinthians chapter 13 definition of love ~ allowing the Holy Spirit more expression through us.

At this point there is a vital step that is missed by many believers. These believers push the offense away and do not acknowledge it. This action is rooted in the misconception that “good” Christians would not let this situation bother them. Thus the accompanying pain is pushed away and gets buried. Another way of dealing with this situation is to spew negative remarks over anyone near you about the offense, thus degrading and slandering the other person involved.

The following steps are essential in forgiveness. Remember this is a process and often takes time.

1. **Own the pain involved.** ~ Bring it to the light as you talk to your heavenly Father. Lay all the hurt before Him, tell Him every detail and every disappointment you are experiencing related to the situation. Have a pity party with the Lord. This step is often missed or cut short, therefore, we are not able to work out forgiveness because all our pain has not been exposed to the light. It is very important to bring all our pain and hurt to the Lord. This cannot be over emphasized!
2. **Confess** ~ any specific wrong doing or attitude you have and ask for forgiveness. Do not generalize by saying, “If I have done anything to provoke or promote this”. Own up to your part of the situation.
3. **Make a decision** ~ to extend forgiveness to the person involved. Release them from what they have done. Be specific.
4. **Go to the person** ~ for the purpose of reconciliation. Matthew 5: 23-24 and Matthew 18
5. **Perform a random act of kindness** ~ for the person. This marks your decision to forgive and puts Satan on notice that you are walking out the commandment to forgive. It is important to have a date

or action to point to when Satan tries to get you to pick up the offense again. He will always try to get you to take your eyes off Jesus and the victory you have experienced and to put them back on yourself and the forgiven offender. Be alert to this and refuse it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit within you.

The healing process begins the moment you choose to release the grip of an unforgiving spirit.

Many people think blame has to be established before we can forgive, but that is a deception of Satan. We can be sorry a relationship has been broken and express that sorrow without assigning blame. **Satan has been out to divide us since the beginning of time**. We must recognize this to walk in victory in our relationships. Satan can “shade” what we hear and cause us to misinterpret things that were said as our hearing is filtered through past emotions, hurts, and expectations. We must remember Satan is out to divide us and rob us of our joy and of our reward. He wants to defeat us in our Christian walk.

It is helpful to remember we are all involved in the ongoing process of becoming more spiritually mature. We must have grace for the areas of immaturity in each other. “*Understand (this) my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear (a ready listener), slow to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry.*” James 1:19 (AMP) As we learn to live more and more by this scripture, offense will come less and less. The temptation to take offense will not find fertile soil in our spirits. “*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.*” 1 Peter 4:8 (NIV)

Truths

Forgiveness is not overlooking.

Forgiveness is not a feeling.

Forgiveness is not pretending you were not hurt.

Forgiveness is not saying what the other person did was not so bad.

Forgiveness is not relieving others of their responsibility.

It is transferring the accountability of their actions over to God so that He can deal with them.

Forgiveness does not mean that you have to have a close friendship or establish a trust relationship with the person involved.

Colossians 3:10 gives us clear instructions on relating to our fellow man. It is helpful to reflect on the following statements which help us get a Godly perspective on forgiveness.

- 1.) Is it enough for you that you are not without sin?
- 2.) Is it enough that Jesus died for all the offenses of your life?
- 3.) Is it enough for you that Jesus died for all the sins of the one who offended you?
- 4.) If Jesus forgave him/her ~ died for him/her ~ how is it that you refuse to give it up?

Forgiveness is a decision we make to obey God and to walk freely from offense with all mankind. It is a decision not to allow someone else's actions or attitudes to dictate your actions or attitudes towards them. Forgiveness is getting your own heart right before God. **We are to guard against a bitter root finding a place to grow in our spirits.** *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."* Hebrews 12:14-15 (NIV)

When we forgive others we release God to do His restoring work with the other person involved. We step from between God and the other person. Forgiveness frees God to act on our behalf. As we choose to forgive we put ourselves in God's hands. We do not let the person and/or the situation involved rule our thoughts and feelings. As we follow the steps outlined for forgiveness we feel the release of a heavy burden and see it laid at the feet of our heavenly Father. We can then experience Him as Jehovah Shalom ~ our peace.

Any person or memory that unsettles you probably means there is potential for unforgiveness. Any person you want to avoid signals wounds not dealt with. Look at this and take it to your heavenly Father. Past wounds will surface tempting us to take them up again.

The Message Bible says *"Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live generously and graciously towards others, the way God lives towards you."* Matthew 5
"Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. In that way you will be acting as true sons of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:44A (Living Bible)

"So be merciful, sympathetic, tender, responsive, and compassionate even as your Father is (all these)." Luke 6:36 (AMP)

Ask God to direct you as to whether you need to go to the person you have forgiven. Sometimes doing this can cause great harm. Sometimes it isn't possible due to death or distance. Seek God's counsel on the correct action to take. If you do feel led to go to the person, it is important to ask them, "Will you forgive me?" Get an answer. If they say, "yes," rejoice in it. If they say, "no," the spiritual responsibility goes over to them. Matthew 5:23-24 speaks to the action to take if someone else is offended by you.

The heart of the matter is to talk it out with the Lord, to follow the steps outlined for forgiving, and then remember in regard to the offense.

Don't nurse it.

Don't rehearse it.

Let it go!

Walk as a free person having freed the other person by your forgiveness. Then you are able to say "Jesus is Lord, Christ is my life and I choose to let His life flow out of me."

Many of us have incurred deep wounds from the tongue or actions of others close to us. If you are not able to walk in victory seek Godly counsel.

Romans Chapter 13 instructs us in how to treat each other so we may fulfill the scripture.

"Live in peace with each other."

I Thessalonians 5:13B (NIV)

Written by Peggy Park
P. O. Box 22101
Lexington, KY 40522
parkpraisepublications@insightbb.com
www.parkpraisepublications.com



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Cover Art: Dennis Lipps

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