

# BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

## for *Forgiveness & Reconciliation*

*...the priest found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses... and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD."*

*...Moreover, Shaphan the scribe... read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the law, he tore his clothes. Then the king*

*commanded... "Go, inquire of the LORD... concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."*

*II Chronicles 34:14-21*

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# **Table of Contents**

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<b>The Sovereignty of God</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• God is in control!</li></ul>	<b>Page 1-2</b>
<b>Trials and Tribulation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trials and tribulations are a part of the Christian life!</li></ul>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>The Cost of Unforgiveness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forgiveness is free, however, unforgiveness is costly.</li></ul>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Why Forgive?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Four biblical reasons why forgiveness is not an option.</li></ul>	<b>Page 5-6</b>
<b>Reconciliation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restoring broken relationships.</li></ul>	<b>Page 7-9</b>
<b>Maintaining Your Commitment to Forgive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overcoming the bondage of bitterness and unforgiveness.</li></ul>	<b>Page 10-12</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is hard to forgive, but it is harder not to forgive.</li></ul>	<b>Page 13</b>

*\*\* Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible.*

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## ***The Sovereignty of God***

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**Sovereign** - *Possessing supreme power, unlimited wisdom, and absolute authority.*

*"... You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all."  
-Psalm 139:1-4*

*"All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him 'What have You done?'"  
-Daniel 4:35*

Psalm 139:1-18 teaches that God knows each of us intimately. All of our days were fashioned or created by Him. Before you knew God, or accepted Him as Lord and Savior He knew you and predestined all the days of your life. God gave you the gift of freewill. He chose you that you might follow Him, and gave you the freedom to reject Him.

God has given mankind freedom to do good and freedom to do evil. Therefore, the reality is that God's children live in a fallen world and are often touched by the evil around them. If God shielded His children from all evil, allowing only good, the unsaved would only be motivated to turn to Him for the guarantee of an easy life. In fact, this is the very argument that began the historic showdown in heaven between God and Satan in the life of Job.

*"...God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust."  
-James 1:13-14*

Satan said to God,

*"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."  
-Job 1:9-11*

God then *allowed* Satan to bring evil upon Job through the loss of his possessions, his children, and finally his health. God is a loving Father and does not *bring* evil into our lives, however for His purpose and for our ultimate good, He *allows* us to be touched by evil. The outcome of Job's suffering was trust and intimacy with God.

*"Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted...I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but not my eye sees You...'"  
-Job 42:1-6*

Job did not understand *why* God was *allowing* him to suffer (God had declared in Job 2:3 that Job was a righteous man), therefore Job asked God, "Why?" For several chapters Job agonizes over this question, seeking a satisfactory answer. God never answers the question, instead He directs Job's attention to His power and glory, which is displayed in His creation. Job is satisfied with a newfound understanding of the greatness of God. When we suffer we, like Job, want an explanation. "Why, why, why?" One of the many lessons we learn from Job is that "Why?" is the wrong question. We should instead ask God, "What?" "What are You trying to teach me? What is Your will for me in this season of suffering?"

*“In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.”*

*-Ephesians 1:11*

*“...In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

*-1 Peter 1:3-7*

- ***Knowing that God is sovereign, what part of your life is beyond God’s power, wisdom, or authority?***
- ***What day or circumstance has touched you that God did not know beforehand?***
- ***How should you respond to life’s disappointments, difficulties, suffering, and trials?***

We can choose to either harbor bitterness toward parents who disappointed us, a spouse who deserted us, friends who failed us, or a drunk driver who killed a loved-one, or we can place our faith in a sovereign God.

When we come to Christ, we trust Him with our eternal destiny. We must also trust Him with our past and present circumstances. He alone can comfort and strengthen us in and through our trials. He alone can bring good out of bad. Our obedience to God’s Word will give us peace, and bring praise, honor, and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Notes:**

**Trials and Tribulation**

*“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation’ but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*  
 -John 16:33

- **God’s Word teaches that trials and tribulations are part of the Christian life.**

Just as the refiner places the crude gold into the crucible, and administers heat in order to bring the dross to the surface, God places His beloved children in the crucible of suffering in order to refine us, and transform us into the image of our Redeemer.

*“He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness.”*  
 -Malachi 3:3

If we trust Him our very lives will permeate with the love, hope, and confidence of Jesus Christ. As others look at us, they will see the life, love, and righteousness of Christ in us.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son...”*  
 -Romans 8:28, 29

This verse does not say *some things*, but *all things*. The key is faith. If we choose to believe God’s promises and trust Him in the midst of our trials and tribulations, we will be victorious and God will be glorified in our life.

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”*  
 -2 Corinthians 2:14

- **Are you willing to allow God to transform your life through your trials?**
- **Are you willing to trust God with the pain that others have caused in your life?**
- **Are you willing to obey God and forgive that you might be set free from the bondage and pain that has resulted from unforgiveness in your life?**

“There are times, says Jesus, when God cannot lift the darkness from you, but trust Him. God will appear like an unkind friend, but He is not; He will appear like an unnatural Father, but He is not; He will appear like an unjust judge, but He is not. Keep the notion of the mind of God behind all things strong and growing. Nothing happens in any particular unless God’s will is behind it, therefore you can rest in perfect confidence in Him.”

Oswald Chambers

**Notes:**

## The Cost of Unforgiveness

The word *forgive* means literally, *to give away*. When a debt is forgiven, the rights to payment are *given away*. If someone injures us and we forgive them, we *give away* the freedom to continue being angry and resentful towards the one who wronged us. We absorb the loss ourselves. The word *pardon* is derived from the Latin word, *perdonare*, meaning to *grant freely*. True forgiveness is undeserved, unmerited, and free. It is not *just* or *fair*. In the Scriptures, to *forget* means, *to let go from one's power*.

When we refuse to grant forgiveness, choosing rather to maintain our *right* to demand payment for wrongs done to us, we must be willing to absorb the cost incurred by that choice. Forgiveness is free, however unforgiveness carries with it a costly price tag. Unwillingness to forgive produces *resentment*. Resentment means, *to feel again*. Resentment clings to the past, reliving it over and over. Resentment, like *picking a scab*, prohibits our wounds from healing.

*"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."*  
-Hebrews 12:15

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."*  
-Ephesians 4:31

- ◆ In Hebrews 12:15 we learn that bitterness, like a deep root, takes a firm hold in the human heart, then grows, and produces *fruit*. However, rather than nourish others, this fruit is bitter, causes trouble, and defiles others.
- ◆ Most of us do not readily admit that we have been harboring unforgiveness. However, Ephesians 4:31 teaches that there is undeniable evidence in an individual's life that the bitter tree of resentment is growing within their heart.

**Wrath** – *An outburst of a strong, vengeful anger or indignation, seeking retribution.*

**Anger** – *A state of mind marked by fretfulness and grief.*

**Evil speaking** – *Unkind words, verbal abuse against someone, slander, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, backbiting, insult and defamation.*

**Malice** – *Hateful feelings that we nurture in our hearts. A desire to see another suffer.*

Ask yourself, "Are any of these common in my life?"

- Pride
- Self-righteous
- Self-pity
- Emotional disturbances
- Anxiety, tension & stress
- Health problems
- Eating disorders
- Lack of trust in relationships
- Lack of intimacy in marriage
- Sexual dysfunction
- Judgmental & critical of others
- Ultra-sensitive & easily offended
- Absence of peace & joy
- Broken fellowship with Jesus

## **Why Forgive?**

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Besides the before mentioned devastation that results from unforgiveness, we are indebted to forgive because:

- **God commands it!**

Obedience to the Father is not optional. If we pick and choose when we will and will not obey God’s commands, we will live unfruitful, ineffective, and spiritually barren lives.

*“But love your enemies, and do good...and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

- Luke 6:35,36

- **In forgiving, we resemble Jesus, and bear the family likeness.**

The term *Christian* means *little Christ*. As Christians, we are called to carry the name of Christ to a lost world. We must be willing to bear His image; to be like Him. Christ demonstrated forgiveness. He came to this earth to bring forgiveness to the guilty. He gave the commission to the church to continue proclaiming forgiveness. We must, if we are to rightly bear His name, forgive those who have offended us!

*“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’.”*

-Luke 23:34

- **Forgiveness is the only means of breaking the cycle of blame and suffering.**

Forgiveness offers the way out! It does not settle all questions of blame and fairness, and often evades those questions altogether. It does allow a relationship to start over, and begin anew.

This truth is demonstrated in the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-45. Though he was mistreated, betrayed, abandoned by his brothers, and sold into slavery, he refused to allow the root of bitterness to take hold of his life. Shortly before being reunited with his brothers, he testified of the healing work that God had done in his life during the years of separation, as demonstrated in the naming of his sons. In Genesis 41:51,52 we read:

*“Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me forget all my trouble in all my father’s household.’”*

*“He named the second Ephraim, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction...’”*

To *forget* in this sense does not mean to cease to remember, but *to let go*, to cease to let the memory of hurtful things control your present life. Joseph’s *fruitfulness* was directly related to his *forgetfulness*. Remember that resentment means *to feel again*. Joseph chose to trust God with his past.

*“And whenever you stand praying. If you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”*  
-Mark 11:25

*“...the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked.”*  
-1 John 2:6

Unforgiveness imprisons us to the past and locks out all potential for a fruitful life.

During Joseph's years alone in Egypt, he allowed God to heal his heart, which had been broken by his own brothers. Later, when given the opportunity, Joseph extended love, forgiveness, and grace to his brothers. Joseph speaks to them in Genesis 45:

*"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life...and to keep you alive by a great deliverance...He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him."*

There was no blaming, no explanations demanded, only the voice of mercy and forgiveness. The way was cleared for Joseph and his brothers to be reunited and begin a new relationship.

*"...in the ages to come  
He might show the  
surpassing riches of His  
grace in kindness toward  
us in Christ Jesus."  
-Ephesians 2:7*

- **Forgiveness relieves the burden of guilt in the offender.**

Joseph's brothers would have carried their grief to their graves if he had not extended forgiveness to them. Forgiveness, undeserved and unearned, can cut the cords and let the oppressive burden of guilt roll away.

If Jesus had not extended kindness to sinners, we would remain in the stranglehold of guilt. He made the first move toward us that made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him.

**Notes:**

## **Reconciliation**

*“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*  
 -Ephesians 4:31-32

To *reconcile* is to restore to friendship or harmony, or to settle or resolve differences. It is the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. Reconciliation implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.

The Scriptures instruct us to *“Let all bitterness...be put away from you...be kind...tenderhearted, forgiving...”*

- **How do we put away bitterness?**
- **How do we reconcile with someone that we have offended?**
- **How do we repair the hurt we have caused others?**
- **How do we forgive someone who has offended us?**
- **How can we change our own feelings about a wrong done?**

### **IF YOU NEED TO BE FORGIVEN**

**As an act of the will, you must:**

- 1. Confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you and, by His Holy Spirit to fill your heart with His love.**

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”*  
 -Psalm 32:1,3-5

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*  
 -1 John 1:9

Take a moment right now to cry out to God, asking Him to forgive you and to fill you with His Holy Spirit to strengthen you to obey. God alone forgives sins. He forgives and He forgets. By faith, accept God’s absolute forgiveness and cleansing.

“Forgiveness is not an emotion...Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.”

-Corrie ten Boom

*“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*  
 -Psalm 103:12

- 2. If possible, go to those you have wronged, humbly make confession, and ask for their forgiveness.**

Six of the most powerful words  
 in the English language,  
*“I was wrong. Please forgive me.”*

*“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”*

*-Matthew 5:23-24*

*“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”*

*-Matthew 6:33*

*“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”*

*-Titus 3:3-5*

*“So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt...if you say to this mountain, be removed and be cast into the sea, it will be done.’”*

*-Matthew 21:21*

Write out your commitment to obey Matthew 5:23-24.

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If possible, do this face to face. However, due to logistics, you may have communicate with the person by telephone or in writing. Don't let distractions or other obstacles delay this act of obedience. In our modern society, the telephone system and postal service can put us in touch with others in a day or two.

Share your decision with a trustworthy Christian friend, asking them to prayer partner with you and hold you accountable to follow through on your commitment.

### **3. Spend time daily with the Lord in His Word, and in prayer.**

Write out your decision to the Lord to spend time with Him daily in prayer, reading of His Word, and meditation.

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### **4. Ponder the meaning of the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made for your sins.**

Take a moment right now and thank Jesus for all that He has done for you, for forgiving you for all of your sins, for His perfect plan of transforming you into His image, and for the gift of His Holy Spirit.

*“Whenever I see myself before God and realize something of what my blessed Lord has done for me at Calvary, I am ready to forgive anybody anything, I cannot withhold it. I do not even want to withhold it.”*

*-Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

## **IF YOU NEED TO FORGIVE**

### **1. Pray and ask God for the strength to obey and forgive the person or persons.**

God promised to give us the strength to move mountains. This may be your Mt. Everest! We know that it is God's will that we forgive others, so we can be confident that if we ask for His strength, it will be granted.

### **2. Communicate your forgiveness to the person or persons.**

The word *forgive* is a *verb*, or an *action word*. To truly forgive requires you to *take action*. God is using His Word to speak to you right now, revealing truth for you to obey and *act upon*.

**Edify** - To *build up*, or *encourage*.

*“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”*  
 -1 John 5:14

*“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*  
 -Romans 14:19

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*  
 -Matthew 6:14

*“In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”*  
 -Romans 2:16

*“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”*  
 -Romans 2:1

“The degree to which I am able and willing to forgive others is a clear indication of the extend to which I have personally experienced God my Father’s forgiveness for me.”

-Phillip Keller

Forgiveness is not an easy thing to do, therefore you must not try to stand alone, but seek the support and accountability of a mature Christian friend, spouse, or prayer partner.

Write out your commitment to forgive the person or persons, and give yourself a date to contact them by, so you won’t let yourself put it off!

- **Do I have to go to them in person?**
- **Can I call or write them instead?**

In some cases, due to logistics, cost of travel, safety to you, or the ability of the other person to be quiet long enough to let you say what you need to say, a letter, email or telephone call may be the best way for you to accomplish this.

**Keep these points in mind when either speaking or communicating in writing:**

**1. You are doing this out of obedience to your Heavenly Father who loves and cares for you.**

He wants you to be free from the bondage and oppression you have been experiencing as a result of unforgiveness.

**2. You do not have to rehearse every detail or act of the offense against you.**

Many times, especially when forgiving parents, they are completely unaware of what they may have done that hurt you. In other cases, it may have been blatant sin against you, for example, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, rape, abandonment by a parent, friend, or spouse, slander spoken against you, etc. In these cases, you can be more specific as to why you need to forgive.

**3. Do not try to compel others to own up to their offenses.**

God has called you to obey, not to be a prosecuting attorney, jury, or judge! Keep it short. In most cases, due to the high level of emotions, we can find ourselves saying things we did not plan on saying that may undermine the purpose of the meeting, letter, or conversation.

**4. Finally, ask them to forgive you for harboring bitterness toward them.**

Remember that what they may have done was wrong and offensive, but bitterness and unforgiveness is equally wrong.

## Maintaining Your Commitment to Forgive

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”*  
-Galatians 5:22-26

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*  
-Ephesians 6:12

*“Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give an opportunity to the devil.”*  
-Ephesians 4:26-27

*“Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.”*  
- Philippians 4:8

The person you have forgiven may continue to be a regular part of your life; possibly a parent, a child, or a spouse. When this is the case you may encounter a spiritual battle after you have asked for forgiveness or forgiven them.

The forgiveness experience has changed you, but it has not necessarily changed *them*. God has had a major victory in your life in bringing you to this place of surrender and obedience, however, their position may not have changed! They may continue to hold onto bitterness toward you. If this is the case you need to seek God *daily* for His strength to extend mercy and compassion to them without compromising.

For example, if you forgave a parent for being harsh and unloving, and asked them to forgive you for harboring bitterness, yet the next time you see them, they continue to be harsh and unloving, your flesh may want to react in the way you formerly reacted. God will be faithful to produce His fruit in your life as you surrender to Him moment by moment.

You must keep in mind that your obedience in forgiving was not so that the other person or persons would change. Unless they surrender their lives and experiences to the Lord, they *cannot* change. Only God can change our hearts and renew our minds, and only if we surrender to Him.

We are involved in a spiritual battle everyday. The enemy, Satan, does not want you to obey God or have victory over sin. Therefore, he will attack your mind with past memories, evil thoughts, lies, temptations, and condemnation. You must exercise self-control and remember *what* and *whom* you are battling!

This is the reality in which we live! Satan hates to lose ground in your life. He does not like the idea that he has lost the ability to continue to rob you of God’s peace and joy.

- **How do I stop giving the devil *opportunities* to work his destruction in my life?**

1. **Take each thought that enters your mind and measure it by God’s Word to see if it is from God, from your flesh, or from the enemy.**

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”*  
-2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*  
 -Romans 15:13

*“... I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.”*  
 -2 Corinthians 2:9-11

**2. Pray in each instant of decision for God’s power to do His will.**

*“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*  
 -Romans 12:21

**3. Resist and rebuke the devil in the name of Jesus.**

*“Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil...dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”*  
 - Jude 1:9

*“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you...your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...”*  
 -1 Peter 5:6-9

God wants you to be aware of the devil’s devices so that you can have victory. Unforgiveness is one of Satan’s most powerful tactics to keep God’s people in bondage!

- **What if the person that I am forgiving does not want to reconcile the relationship?**

You must keep in mind that you are only responsible for your part of reconciliation. Regardless of the position the other person takes, you must obey God by asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness. If the other person refuses to grant you forgiveness or if they do not acknowledge their wrong toward you, God will still bless you for your obedience and pour out His peace, grace, and mercy upon your life. You will still experience His freedom from your bondage.

You cannot place any expectations or requirements upon what the other person may say or do, but surrender all to the Lord and trust Him to work in the midst of your circumstances. This is a major inner personal battle that many people face with this act of obedience.

We must not lean on our own understanding, but obey and surrender to God and His will. He has given us spiritual laws to govern and protect us. His Word gives us understanding and instructions in how to follow these laws. Our flesh, our pride, and fear will keep us from trusting and obeying God in these situations, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can overcome.

**Pray this prayer:**

*“Lord Jesus, I pray for the strength to trust You in these circumstances. Help me to remember that I am doing this for You. I do not look to... for anything, but place my life in Your hands. I pray for reconciliation with this person, but I know that I can only do my part. I pray for...to surrender to You that You might be glorified. I trust you entirely with the results. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen”*

- **What if the person I need to forgive is deceased? Can I still forgive them?**

Bitterness in the human heart lives on long after the object of that bitterness has died. Forgiveness is not optional, but a requirement from God which His children must obey. The death of the offender does not nullify God's Word. True, biblical forgiveness requires us to take action. We must do more than agree in our minds or hearts that we should forgive. The Bible does not command us to merely *feel* forgiveness. We must exercise our will and follow through with our actions!

You must begin with confession to the Lord. To *confess* means to *acknowledge or disclose one's misdeed, fault or sin*. It is helpful if you speak your confession out loud and verbalize your forgiveness of the deceased person, in the presence of a trusted friend, spouse, pastor, counselor, etc.

**Use the following prayer to help guide you:**

*"Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross and forgiving me for all of my sins. I agree with Your Word that I must forgive this person for the hurt they caused me. I ask You for the strength to obey and speak these words of forgiveness.*

*I forgive...for...(you may say out loud, if you wish). I ask you to take away my bitterness and forgive me for holding onto this bitterness for so long. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen"*

**Notes:**

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths."  
-Proverbs 3:5-6*

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## Conclusion

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It is awfully hard to forgive. It is harder *not* to forgive. If we do not forgive, we deny what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Our experience of God's forgiveness is directly related to our ability to forgive. A readiness to forgive others is part of the indication that we have truly repented and received God's forgiveness. A broken heart toward God cannot be a hard heart toward others.

Pride and fear keep us from forgiveness and reconciliation. Refusing to give in, or be broken, insisting on our rights, and defending ourselves are all indications that our selfish pride is ruling our life, rather than the Lord. If fears of 'what-ifs' are consuming and controlling you, you need to pray for the faith to trust and obey God. Enemies are very expensive to keep. Matthew 18:21-35 warns that an unforgiving heart will put us in an emotional prison.

"The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving... When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us."

-Lewis Smedes

***Family Discipleship Ministries***  
***561 N. Magnolia Avenue***  
***El Cajon, CA 92020***  
***(619) 590-1901 Fax (619) 590-1905***  
***[www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org)***  
***email: [info@parentingministry.org](mailto:info@parentingministry.org)***