



Daily Devotional September 14-18 All About Love: Love Is Forgiving

DAY ONE | Real forgiveness is not forgetting what happened.

“...[love] keeps no record of being wronged.”

–Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:5

Our memories store millions of pieces of information gained through our senses since birth. Some experiences are impossible to forget, and any effort to forget them only makes them more prominent. In conversations about forgiveness, we often hear the cliché “*forgive and forget*,” but forgiveness does not mean that a person who has been wronged develops some kind of holy amnesia. A person who has been abused will never forget that it happened. A person who has suffered from an unfaithful spouse will always remember that experience.

- *Read Philippians 3:13-14.* Bible scholars say that Paul’s “forgetting the past” in these verses refers not to a memory wipe, but to a choice of focus. How might this relate to forgiveness? How has focusing on past hurts helped or hurt you in your own life?
- *Read Romans 8:26-28.* What do Paul’s words here tell us about God’s perspective on the painful things that happen to us? What role does the Holy Spirit play? How can this perspective help us with the painful things in our past that we are unable to forget?
- **Take time today to assess the hurts in your life that you may be clinging to. Pray Romans 8:28 over those, asking the Holy Spirit to change your focus toward God’s future for you.**

DAY TWO | Real forgiveness relinquishes my right to get even.

“Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.”

–Paul in Romans 12:19

It’s been said that we always cry for *justice* for everyone else, but we plead for *forgiveness* for ourselves. There’s something basically unfair about our perspective of forgiveness, but it can also feel unfair to give up our right to get even with someone who has hurt us, as Paul counsels in *Romans 12:19* (above).

- **Why do we cling to fantasies of revenge for those who have hurt us? Read Hebrews 12:14-15.** What does “the poisonous root of bitterness” have to do with a conversation about forgiveness? Where have you seen this kind of bitterness grow where forgiveness is absent or where thoughts of revenge are nurtured? What is the result?

Lewis Smedes has said this about relinquishing our right to get even: “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

- **Where have you experienced this kind of freedom as a result of forgiveness? What did you have to give up? What did you get in return?**
- **Where do you need to release bitterness that is rooted in unforgiveness in your life? Ask God to help you open the unforgiving prison of your heart and give you freedom today.**

DAY THREE | Real forgiveness responds to evil with good.

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies!

Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”

—Jesus in Luke 6:27-28

These words of Jesus in *Luke 6:27-28* (above) are so hard to stomach. Jesus’ expectation of us seems completely unrealistic! How is it even possible to love our enemies, to bless and pray for those who have wronged and hurt us?

- *Read / Peter 2:21-25.* What example has Jesus given us of this kind of radical response? What are some specific instances in his biographies, the Gospels, where Jesus modeled this kind of love, blessing, and prayer for those who mistreated him? How can we as imperfect people follow this kind of perfect example of forgiveness?
- **Who is your “enemy,” someone who hates you or has hurt you? Lift that person up in prayer today, asking God to help you love and bless them. Look for ways to actively bless them.**

DAY FOUR | Real forgiveness repeats the process as long as necessary.

Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven!”

—Matthew 18:21-22

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.” That encapsulates Jesus’ response to Peter’s question about how often we have to forgive in *Matthew 18:21-22* (above). Pastor Charles Stanley writes: “Christians with forgiving hearts not only do not limit the number of times they forgive; they continue to forgive with as much grace the thousandth time as they do the first time. Christians are only capable of this type of forgiving spirit because the Spirit of God lives within us, and it is He who provides the ability to offer forgiveness over and over, just as God forgives us over and over.”

- **Are there old wounds you thought you had forgiven that continue to fester in your heart? Consciously bring them before God and offer forgiveness. You may want to write a letter to the person expressing that forgiveness (you can choose to send the letter or not).**

DAY FIVE | Real forgiveness remembers how much I’ve been forgiven by God.

“Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

—Paul in Colossians 3:13b

We’re all tempted to be unforgiving. The hurt feels too deep, the offense too egregious, the disappointment and disillusionment too painful. It’s just human nature. But as followers of Jesus, we’re called to a higher, truer, more difficult and more liberating path. And it begins and ends with the grace we’ve each been given through Jesus’ sacrifice for us.

- *Read Ephesians 4:32.* Why does Paul tell us we should forgive one another? Spend some time exploring the nature of God’s forgiveness toward us. What does it entail? What does it exclude? What conditions do we have to meet to experience that forgiveness?

There is nothing weak or conditional or partial about God’s forgiveness of us. And if we’re to forgive others “just as God through Christ has forgiven us,” then we can’t be weak or conditional or partial, either.

- **Thank God today for his amazing, complete forgiveness of you. Bask in that forgiven-ness. Ask him for strength to pass that freedom on to others.**