

Forgiveness: What It Is & What It Is Not

Forgiveness may be the most challenging and complicated command given.

For-give (1) to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; pardon an offense or offender. (2) To cancel a debt. Webster New World Dictionary

“There is no use in talking as if forgiveness were easy...I’ve forgiven him more times than I can count. For we find that the work of forgiveness has to be done over and over again. We forgive, we mortify our resentment; a week later some chain of thought carries us back to the original offence and we discover the old resentment blazing away as if nothing had been done about it at all. We need to forgive our brother seventy times seven not only for 490 offences but for one offence.”

C.S. Lewis

Proverbs 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

Ephesians 4:32 *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

Colossians 3:12-13 *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³forbearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*

“Millions call themselves by His name, it is true, and pay some token of respect to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who or what is above, and his true choice between God and money, between God and man, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. However the man may protest, **the proof is in the choices he makes day after day throughout his life.”** A.W. Tozer

“The Christian life became impossible, that is, it became supernatural. Now there was only one hope, the sovereign grace of God. God would have to transform my heart to do what a heart cannot make itself do, namely, want what it ought to want. Only God can make the depraved heart desire God.” John Piper

“In our members (flesh), there is a slumbering inclination toward desire, which is both *sudden* and *fierce*. With irresistible power, desire seizes mastery of the flesh. All

at once a secret, smoldering fire is kindled. The flesh burns and is in flames. It makes no difference whether it is a sexual desire, an ambition, or vanity, or **desire for revenge**, or love of fame and power, or greed for money...At this moment God is quite unreal to us. He loses all reality, and only *desire for the creature is real*. The only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God...The lust thus aroused envelopes the mind and will in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us. The questions present themselves as, 'Is what the flesh desires really sin in this case?' And, 'Is it really not permitted to me, yes, expected of me now, here in my particular situation to appease desire?' ...It is here everything within me rises up against the Word of God...Every struggle against lust in one's own strength is doomed to failure." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I. Forgiveness in Christ

Ephesians 1:7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace* (**Colossians 1:14**)

Mark 2:5-7 *When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?*

Romans 4:7-8 *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

Colossians 1:13-14 *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

- **Grace** is God giving us what we did not deserve, unmerited favor.
- **Mercy** is God *not* giving us what we did deserve
- **Redemption:** In the New Testament, redemption carried the idea of ransom or deliverance through payment. Mankind is held under the curse of judgment for their violation of God's law. **Romans 3:10, 3:23-24, 5:12, 6:23** Christ purchased the salvation for man by offering Himself up as payment. The Bible also emphasizes the result of redemption – freedom from the power of sin and freedom to serve God through grace. **Romans 6:18**

- **Propitiation:** It carries the idea of appeasement or satisfaction. In the New Testament, propitiation always referred to the work of God, not of man. Man is utterly incapable of satisfying God's justice on his own. Christ's atoning death altered man's position with God. God accepted what Christ did on the sinner's behalf. The Old Testament picture of propitiation was the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. Christ became our Mercy Seat once and for all. **Romans 3:25, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 2:1-2**

1 John 4:10-11 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

- **Imputation:** To impute means to place into one's account; the attributing of something to someone else. The Bible reveals three major imputations.

Adam's sin to the Human Race: **Romans 5:12, 17-19**

Penalty of the Sin of the Human Race to Jesus Christ: **Isaiah 53:6, 2Cor. 5:21 ***

Righteousness of Jesus Christ to the Believer: **Romans 4:6-8, 22-25**

- **Justification:** Is a divine act whereby God judicially declares a believing sinner to be justified, righteous and acceptable before Him because of Christ's work on the cross. It is on the basis of faith alone, grace alone and not by human merit. A justified believer emerges from God's courtroom with a consciousness that another, a substitute (Christ) bore his guilt and punishment and that he stands without condemnation or accusation before God. **Romans 3:21-29, 5:18-19, 8:1, 10:1-4**

Romans 3:24 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:*

- **Sanctification:** Means to set apart unto God in regards to salvation and service. It can be translated "holy." All believers have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and are "saints." In the Biblical sense, every believer today is just as sanctified in regards to salvation as much as the Apostle Paul.

Romans 6:11-14-22, 7:14-25, 8:9-14

- Positional Sanctification – salvation is a one-time event. This was settled and is secure because of Christ!
- Practical or Progressive Sanctification – this is the growing or maturing process of every believer whereby we are becoming more like Christ.

Romans 8:28-29, 2Peter 3:18

Titus 2:11-15 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. ¹⁵ Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.*

- **Glorification:** There are various aspects of salvation that can be distinguished from one another but never separated from each other. None of which can exist without the other. *Justification* is the beginning of salvation, *glorification* is its completion. Once salvation has begun, God will not stop it, and no other power in the universe can stop it. **Romans 8:17, 30, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, Philippians 1:6**

The grace of God precedes, accompanies, and follows salvation. It sustains our soul, mind, and heart. Not one link of its chain can ever be broken. **Romans 8**

“How many millions of sins in every believer and **ever one whereof were enough to condemn us**, yet his love in Christ forgives completely and eternally!”

John Owen

Isaiah 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. ⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ⁹“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.*

Romans 3:23-26 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: **25** Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; **26** To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Forgiveness in Christ deals with the lifting off of the burden of guilt, with canceling the debt charged to our account, with removing what was held justly against us, and replacing it with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8-11 *But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. **10** For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be*

*saved by his life. **11** And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Hebrews 1:1-3 *GOD, who at various times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **2** Has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; **3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 4:14-16)*

II. Forgiving One Another

Luke 17:3-5 *If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, "I repent" you shall forgive him. ⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, "_____ our _____."*

When we refuse to forgive we not only highlight the offender's original offense but we magnify all their other inconsistencies, while all along minimizing our own. This then bleeds over into a lack of forbearance; which is another violation of Scripture. When we don't extend forgiveness, the price we pay is costly, our perspective in life becomes distorted.

Matthew 6:9-14 *Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. ¹⁴ "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

- Judicial Forgiveness (Justification, Imputation)
- Relational Forgiveness (Confessed Sin and Repentance) **1 John 1:8-2:1**

Psalms 18:25-27 *With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; ²⁶ With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. ²⁷ For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks.*

Psalms 109 | A Imprecatory Psalm is to invoke God's wrath upon ones' enemies.

“As Christians we must of course repent of all the anger, malice, and self-will which allowed the discussion to become a quarrel at all...There is another question, did you fight fair? Or did we not quite unknowingly falsify the whole issue? Did we pretend to be angry about one thing when we knew, or could have known, that our anger had a different and much less presentable cause? Did we pretend to be ‘hurt’ in our sensitive and tender feelings when envy, ungratified vanity, or self-will was our real trouble? Such tactics often succeed. The other parties give in...We win by cheating; how shall we deal with it in others I am not sure; but we should be **merciless** to its first appearances in ourselves.” C.S. Lewis

We have all been disappointed in some way with every relationship we have ever had. Getting along with others is a challenge on various levels. It is called, “living on this side of heaven.” The issue is not that you have met the wrong kind of people or that you lack relational skills. It is that we live in a fallen world filled with flawed people. We never get to hang around perfect people, never! **And let’s never forget we are one of those flawed people.** (Adapted from Paul Tripp)

“Dragons, of course are fictional beasts – monstrous reptiles with lion’s claws, a serpent’s tail, bat wings, and scaly skin. They exist only in the imagination. But there are dragons of a different sort, decidedly real. In most cases, though not always, they do not intend to be sinister; in fact, they’re usually quite friendly. But their charm belies their power to destroy. Within the church, they are often sincere, well-meaning saints, but they leave ulcers, strained relationships, and hard feelings in their wake. They don’t consider themselves difficult people. They don’t sit up nights thinking of ways to be nasty. Often they are pillars of the community – talented, strong personalities, deservedly respected – but for some reason, they undermine the ministry of the church. They are not naturally rebellious or pathological; they are loyal church members, convinced they’re serving God, but they wind up doing more harm than good. They can drive pastors crazy...or out of the church. Some dragons are openly critical. They are ones who accuse you for being (pick one) too spiritual, not spiritual enough, too dominant, too laid back, too narrow, too loose, too structured, too disorganized, or ulterior in your motives. These criticisms are painful because they are largely unanswerable. How can you defend yourself and maintain a spirit of peace? How can you possibly prove the purity of your motives? **Dragons make it hard to disagree without being disagreeable.**” Marshall Shelly

1. We are never to judge motives regardless of what information we may have.
Matthew 7:1, 24
 2. Suspend judgment until as much information as possible is gained.
Proverbs 18:13, 15, 17
 3. Having accurate information still requires we use it in God-honoring way.
Colossians 4:6
 4. We have limited ability for accurate judgment even when we have complete information. **Luke 9:46-47**
 5. Only God can make perfect judgment 100% of the time. **Psalm 139:1-4**
 6. We slant the story to make ourselves look better and do so often without being aware of it. **Matthew 7:3-5** (log in our own eye)
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Joseph: Genesis 37-50 (From the Pit, to Prison, to the Palace)

Genesis 27:23-25 *So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. ²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. ²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal.*

Genesis 39:9-10 *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" ¹⁰ So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.*

Genesis 50:15-21 *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying, ¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you." ' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. ²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Four Principles of Serving God Together | Paul & Barnabas

Adapted from Chuck Swindoll

1. **Disagreements are inevitable** – Opinions come from thinking, and there will always be differing opinions on any given issue. Note the difference between having personal expectations unmet and actually being sinned against. Note the difference between opposing viewpoints and sinful words.
2. **Even the godly will not always agree** – Disagreement is not necessarily a sign of carnality. People on both sides of an issue may be walking faithfully with the Lord. Do not confuse bad decisions with sinful decisions. There is a difference.
3. **In every disagreement there are at least two ingredients:** at least one issue and at least two points of view. We all come from various backgrounds; when we are faced with various issues, we will react in distinct ways. We merely look at the same issue from different points of view.
4. **In many disagreements each side is valid.** Often there isn't a right and wrong side; there are simply different ways of looking at the same issue. We must accept this fact and respond to it in a way that honors our Lord.

The Best Way to Criticize

Adapted from Chuck Swindoll

1. **Chronic Criticism:** These people are rarely satisfied with anything. They have trouble seeing that a society, a school, or a church is not built around their personal needs and expectations. **Luke 7:32**
2. **Negative Criticism:** This always hurts relationships and discourages others. Its focus is to express our feelings rather than deal with facts. Opinions are superior over any desire to resolve conflict.
3. **Murmuring:** The originator of this objection voices their concerns to others instead of going to the one who is responsible. This creates miscommunication; misrepresentation and hurt feelings are inevitable.
4. **Constructive Criticism:** Their main concern is not just to let you know how they feel but to help resolve any misunderstanding or conflict. It is directed at the right party in love and their words are carefully thought out.

The Challenges of Communication

1. What the speaker intends to say
2. What the speaker actually says
3. What the speaker is remembered to have said
4. What the hearer wants to hear
5. What the hearer actually hears
6. What the hearer thinks they hear

The Prodigal Son(s) **Luke 15:11-32**

Hebrews 12:14-17 *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

- God's grace is available to sustain us regardless of the circumstances.
- Bitterness bears fruit of immorality and other serious issues.
- Sin may be forgiven but it has consequences (selling of birthright).

James 3:13-18 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Ephesians 4:26-27 *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil. (Cain and Abel)*

Satan uses unresolved conflict to his advantage in many ways. Those who do not address the anger are blinded to the hurt they inflict on those around them or they justify the pain they cause. They fall deeper into the snare of sin's deception because their agenda for revenge is superior to God's will of forgiveness.

What was really eating Jonah?

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (The Greek word for “wiles” is *methodeia*.)

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

What Forgiveness is...

1. Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them.
2. Choosing to forgive is a choice not a feeling.

How could God command forgiveness if he were based on how we feel?

I cannot “will” my emotions, but I can “will” my actions.

It is much easier to act your way into feelings than to feel your way into actions. Start acting out that which God has called you to do regardless of your feelings and you will discover that feelings will be experienced as a result of your obedience.

Matthew 5:43-44 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (These commands are of willful acts, *not* emotional responses.)

3. Refusing to punish

(The key word is *punish*. Discipline and consequences may be necessary. Even when severe consequences are in order for the one who sinned against us, we should not rejoice in it.)

Proverbs 24:17-18 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; ¹⁸Lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, And He turn away His wrath from him.

4. Being very cautious in telling others what they did

- Retelling our story can be a method of revenge.
- Why are you sharing the information? Who are you sharing it with?
- I’m the master of the words I keep and servant to the words I speak! **Ps 19:14**

God allowed the writers of New Testament to name offenders

Romans 16:17-18 - He identified those who cause division within the church.

Philippians 4:2 - He called for Euodias and Syntyche to promote unity.

2 Timothy 4:10 - Demas forsook Paul in his time of need for love of the world.

2 Timothy 4:14 - Alexander the Coppersmith created great problems for Paul.
2 John 9 - Diotrephes loved having the preeminent position within the church.

5. Demonstrating grace and mercy

Romans 12:17- 21 *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

6. It is an issue of the heart. **Proverbs 4:23**

7. It is the absence of bitterness. **James 3:14**

8. It is a demonstration of faith. **Hebrews 11:6** *Faith* is obeying God regardless of feelings, circumstances. or consequences.

9. It is following the example of Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 5:1-2**

1 Peter 2:19-25 *For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²²"Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; ²³who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

What Forgiveness is not...

1. Approval or excusing an offense.

- There are times when defending one's integrity calls for action.
- There are times when the best response is silence.
- Whether in action or silence, do so for the glory of God.

2. Reconciliation (This requires the participation of all parties involved.)

- Vertical Forgiveness – We express to God our willingness to forgive ASAP.

- Horizontal Forgiveness – It is fully experienced when the offender asks for forgiveness.

Biblical forgiveness requires involvement from both the offender and the offended.

3. Denying what they did

When an offender does not seek your forgiveness there are at least three possible reasons for doing so.

- They are *not* aware that they need to seek forgiveness.
- They are aware but do *not* care.
- They are *not* confident you will extend forgiveness.

4. Forgetting what they did

God is glorified in the fact that we know exactly what someone did to us but we choose to forgive in spite of feelings. Forgiveness is not the way to salvation; it is the proof of salvation.

5. Refusing to take the wrong seriously

What exactly does loving your neighbor as yourself mean?

“Well, how exactly do I love myself? Now that I think of it, I have not exactly got a feeling of fondness or affection for myself, and I do not even always enjoy my own society. So apparently ‘love your neighbor’ does not mean ‘feel fond of him’ or ‘find him attractive’...loving my enemies does not apparently mean thinking them nice either...For many good people imagine that forgiving your enemies means making out that they are really not such bad fellows after all, when it is quite plain that they are...Go a step further. In my most clear-sighted moments not only do I not think myself a nice man, but I know that I am a very nasty one. I can look at some of the things I have done with horror and loathing. So apparently I am allowed to loathe and hate some of the things my enemies do.” *Mere Christianity* - C.S. Lewis

6. Pretending we are not hurt

- We have “flawed freedom” in a fallen world.
 - “Flawed” means we have the ability to good or bad (evil).
 - “Fallen world” means we are recipients of both good and bad.

“God is 100% aware of every detail in our life. **(Psalm 139:1-4)** God may choose to or choose *not to* get actively involved in every detail. What He chooses to do or *not do* is always right and can be used for our good.”

Romans 9:20-21 *But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"*²¹ *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

Psalms 145:17 *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works.*

Romans 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*³⁴ *"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"*³⁵ *"Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"*³⁶ *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

God has sovereignly ordained before the foundation of this world **everything** that happens, but in a way that does not violate secondary causes or does not take away human freedom and responsibility. This is very difficult to comprehend because of the unique relationship between the Creator and created!

Hebrews 13:5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*⁶ *So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

7. Removal of consequences (Ex: If dishonesty has occurred, trust needs rebuilt.)

Ways to Rebuild Trust Within My Family

- Take full responsibility for your sin. **Proverbs 28:13**
- Ask for specific forgiveness. **1 John 1:9**
- Demonstrate genuine sorrow for your words and actions. **Psalms 38:18**
- Do not justify or defend the other parties involved. **Proverbs 17:15**
- Be willing to make yourself accountable. **Philemon v21, 22**
- Be willing to enter discipleship. **2 Peter 3:18**
- Be completely and painfully honest; acknowledge the harm done. **Ephesians 4:20-25**
- Must bring forth fruits (works) that demonstrate repentance. **Matthew 3:8a, 2Corinthians 7:9-10**
- Be willing to keep family informed, be open to questions. **Luke 15:19-20**
- Participate in family and personal devotions. **Psalms 119:11**
- Express patience and realize that rebuilding is a process. It takes much more time to recover from major surgery than it does minor surgery. **Heb. 12:1-4**
- Build new and positive experiences and memories. **Philippians 3:13-14**

Truth telling is non-optional! *(Adapted from Steve Gallagher)*

This single step can be very discouraging for all parties involved in the rebuilding process. The main reason people lie is fear, fear of the consequences, fear of what people may think about them. We all want to slant the story to improve our image and rarely does a person want to come completely clean. Telling the truth *doesn't* mean graphic details need to be shared and every sinful thought revealed.

If you are not being honest to your spouse and the Biblical counselor, you are setting yourself up for another fall that will complicate recovery and trust in a huge way. In **John 8**, the words of Christ tell us that *the truth shall make us free*. (Freedom is the power to do what you know you ought to do, most people know what they ought to do, but they do not have the power to do it – they are in bondage!) Simply put, lies place us and keep us in bondage.

Some Christians have become a master of having a secret world of lies. The sad reality is this, they are not the master at all, sin is the master. Re: **Romans 6:16**

Two Biblical Ingredients: (1) confession and (2) repentance. Re: **Proverbs 28:13, 2 Timothy 2:25-26, 1 John 1:6-10** To separate these two is to sabotage any hope for recovery.

Psalm 119:59 *I thought about my ways, And turned my feet to Your testimonies.*

Genuine, sincere, and honest repentance produces visible and practical steps (fruit) that will decrease the opportunity for future disobedience. A willingness to take whatever steps necessary to please Christ demonstrates genuine repentance.

What Happens When We Don't Forgive?

1. Salvation is unconditional; fellowship with the Father is conditional. **1 John**
2. Justification in Christ is unconditional; the anointing of the Holy Spirit is conditional. *Anointing - to be "led" or "filled" by the Spirit. **Gal. 5, Eph. 5**

Ephesians 4:29-32 *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. ³⁰ And do not grieve the _____ of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

"Forgiveness should be the delight of Christian men." Joseph Parker

Matthew 18 records the teaching of Jesus Christ in regards to (1) humility, (2) compassion, (3) confrontation, and (4) forgiveness. The context of the chapter is built around a response from Christ to his disciples who asked, “*Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*”

- The teaching of **humility** was built around God’s view of children. An alarming illustration was given by Christ in regards to offending children. **Matthew 18:1-10**
- The teaching of **compassion** dealt with a shepherd’s concern for one lost sheep despite the fact that he had safely accounted for 99 sheep. **Matthew 18:11-14**
- The teaching of **confrontation** directly deals with the topic of church discipline. **Matthew 18:15-20**
- The teaching of **forgiveness** focused on two men and their debts. The parable ended with a serious warning of divine judgment for any who refused to forgive. **Matthew 18:21-35**

Matthew 18:32-25 *Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.’³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.³⁵ “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”*

- Although we often do not see it as first, **all of our bitterness is ultimately traceable to a resentment of God.**
- **Relinquishing** bitterness is an open invitation for the **Holy Spirit to give** you His peace, His joy and the knowledge of His will.
- It is a **demonstration of God’s grace** in your life when we are fully aware of what occurred – and still **choose to forgive.**
- The person who **gains the most** from forgiveness **is the one who does the forgiving.**
- The greater the hurt, the **greater God is glorified** and the **greater the blessing** that will accompany the forgiveness you extend.
- **Obedience towards God is** ultimately what total forgiveness is all about; **He is the one** I want to please at the end of the day!

- **A refusal to forgive** means **that God stands back** and lets you cope with your problems in your own strength.
- **Making a choice** to continue in un-forgiveness shows that we **aren't sufficiently grateful for God's forgiveness** of our own sins.

Darkness of mind signifies the lack of light in a person's thinking. The more a person gives himself over to the power of sin, the harder he grows toward God. He may still attend church, sing all of the songs of worship, and even enjoy good preaching, but there is a thick callous around his heart that keeps him from feeling the Holy Spirit nudge him toward repentance. The more a person sins, the thicker that callous grows. Eventually he will find himself so hardened that he can no longer discern truth for himself. Although he is likely to still have some comprehension for doctrinal truth, *the* truth has been effectively shut out of his heart.

We don't produce spiritual transformation within our hearts; nor do we self-produce wisdom; it is the **result of God's power** and **grace** through sincere prayer and Bible study. ***Philippians 2:12-13***

3. We place ourselves under divine discipline. ***1 Corinthians 11:28-32***
Hebrews 12:5-17

Each time we refuse to forgive, we increase the burden in carrying them. This fact should motivate a person to address each offense immediately.

James 2:13 *For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.*

*"I am convinced that multitudes of Christians who suffer from stress, depression, discouragement, relationship problems, and **all sorts of other hardships** experience these things because of a refusal to forgive."* John MacArthur

Psalm 32:1-4 *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile. 3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old Through my roaring all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

4. Our eternal destiny is fixed; but receiving additional reward is conditional.
1 Corinthians 3:11-15

2 Corinthians 5:8-11 *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment*

seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

2 John 8 *Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*

5. It reveals an indifference to the greatest thing God ever did – having his sinless Son forgive sinners

2 Corinthians 5:18 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

III. Forgiving Ourselves

“Making God’s love contingent on our action is a sad but common misunderstanding in the church. Remember, a believer’s union is never in jeopardy. For God’s love can never be heightened by any act of ours, and cannot be lessened by anything in us. While **our sense of communion with God** may fluctuate, **his love does not grow and diminish.** The **wrath of God against the sin of saints was exhausted on the cross.**” John Owen 1616-1683

“While union (our position) with Christ is something that does not ebb and flow, one’s experience of communion (fellowship) with Christ can fluctuate...**When a believer grows comfortable with sin** this invariably affects the level of intimacy this person feels with God. It is **not that the Father’s love grows and diminishes** for his children in accordance to their actions...Sin tends to isolate the believer, making him **feel** distant from God. Then comes the accusations – **both from Satan and self.**” John Owen

1 John 1:8-2:2 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may*

not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

“All things in heaven, earth, around, within, without, condemn me – the sun which sees my misdeeds, the darkness which is light to thee, the cruel accuser who justly charges me, the good angels who have been provoked to leave me, thy countenance which scans my secret sins, thy righteous law, thy holy Word, my sin-soiled conscience, my private and public life, my neighbors, myself – all write dark things against me. I deny them not, frame no excuse, but confess, Father, I have sinned! Yet, still I live, and fly repenting to thy outstretched arms; thou wilt not cast me off, for **Jesus brings me near, thou wilt not condemn me, for he died in my stead**, thou wilt not mark my mountains of sin, for he leveled all, and his beauty covers my deformities. O my God, I bid farewell to sin by clinging to his cross, hiding in his wounds, and sheltering in his side.” Puritan Prayer

Romans 8:28-30 *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. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

- The sin that should bother me the most should be my sin and there is a proper way to address it, but despair usually opens the door for more sins, not fewer.
- Beating myself up emotionally doesn't make me a better Christ-follower.
- “There is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in you.” Richard Sibbs
- God's throne is one of mercy and grace. **Hebrews 4:14-16**

Matthew 11:28-30 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Recommended Resources:

Insightful authors are truly a gift from God. They can never do for the heart and soul what God's Word and prayer can do, nor were they ever intended to do so. **Nothing can still an anxious heart as God,** nothing can guide a reckless heart in a careless **world like God,** not books, not information, **but God Himself through the grace of Christ ministered by the Holy Spirit. Our deepest need is God,** not information about God. The true teacher, the Holy Spirit, uses Scripture as the means to bring about the best and greatest goal, loving Jesus with all our heart, mind, and soul.

- *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* by John MacArthur
- *Peacemakers* by Ken Sande
- *When You've Been Wronged* by Erwin Lutzer
- *War of Words* by Paul Tripp
- *A Tale of Three Kings* by Gene Edwards
- *Total Forgiveness* by R.T. Kendall

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