

Facts about Forgiveness

All of us at one time will have someone to forgive. We live in a fallen and broken world, the question is not “if” we are hurt, but “when” we will be hurt.

We are commanded to forgive. We are a people for whom much has been forgiven by God. Our God is a loving God and would not command us to do what is impossible.

We forgive for our own good, not for the good of the person who hurt us. As long as the unforgiveness exists in our hearts it grows into bitterness. It is like a cancer that unless gotten rid of has the power to kill our relationship with God, others and ourselves.

Until we forgive we are tied to that person and that event. Satan will use that bondage against us. In order to heal and move on with our lives we must cut the chain that has us in bondage. We do that by forgiving.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Even God does not forget our sins, but promises not to use them against us. We have not forgiven someone if we continue to bring up the past hurt and use it against him/her.

We don't wait until we feel like forgiving. We never will. Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Therefore, we do not say, “Lord, help me to forgive....”, rather “Lord, I choose to forgive..”

Forgiveness is not “fair”. We must decide to live with the consequences of another's sin. We will have to anyway. The decision is whether we will do it in the freedom of forgiveness or in the bondage of bitterness.

Forgiveness does not mean that we tolerate sin. God does not want us to be hurt or abused. We are his children and should be treated with respect and dignity.

Forgiveness does not demand revenge or repayment. We trust God to handle the judgment and penalty for the sin. He is the only one who can do it fairly. We may let someone off our hook, but he is never off of God's.

We evaluate a past event by who we are now. We are children of the Living God, seated in heaven at Christ's right hand, eternal and glorious beings of light, and God's ambassadors in this world (people are looking at us). WE ARE NOT VICTIMS.

Making an excuse for the person who hurt us is only an excuse for us not to forgive. The people who we love the most have the best shot at hurting us the most, and they usually do. We can understand why he/she did what he/she did, but we are still commanded to face the hurt and forgive .

Forgiveness does not depend upon the person who hurt us. It is between us and God. The person who hurt us may not even be aware of the pain inflicted, or may never care. We do not need to forgive someone face to face. We seek the face of God and declare our forgiveness to Him.

We must forgive from our heart. This means that we get to the emotional root of the pain, how the event made us feel. This is essential for true healing to take place. For example, we say something like, “I forgive my father for never paying attention to me as a child and making me feel unworthy, unimportant and unlovable.”

Forgiveness is the only way to stop the pain. We may not feel the difference immediately, but the healing will begin as we forgive and trust God with the consequences.

Forgiving our parents is the best way to honor them. Some are afraid of facing the fact that their parents hurt them, thinking that would not honor them. When we forgive our parents we are better able to love them as God desires.

Don't forget to forgive God. God does not need to be forgiven, of course. He is perfect and never sins or causes sin, but we may have a false expectation of what God can and should do. Maybe we are angry with God for allowing a terrible thing to happen. We must be honest with God and ourselves and release Him from that false expectation.

Forgive yourself. Next to receiving God's forgiveness, forgiving ourselves is vital to our freedom. If a perfectly holy God can forgive us, then who are we not to forgive and trust Him with the consequences of our sin. Our ability to move on and have healthy relationships with Him and others depends on it.

Exercise in forgiveness.

1. Find a quiet place to be alone for some time with God. Submit yourself to His lordship and protection and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in the process.
2. Prayerfully ask God to bring to your mind any bitterness and unforgiveness.
3. Make a list of the people you need to forgive. Along side of each name write the specific thing that they did to harm you and how it made you feel. You don't need many words; God knows the details.
4. Choose to forgive them in God's strength. He will provide it as you move ahead by faith.

5. ***Out loud to God pray:***

"Lord, I forgive (name of person) for (every hurt and pain that God brings to your mind, be specific) and making me feel (how each made you feel).

Go through your list, doing this for each person. (Don't forget yourself.)

For your feelings of anger against God, you might pray something like:

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been holding the false expectation that You (specify)____. I now release You from that expectation. I announce the truth: that You are a loving, compassionate God and seek only what is best for me. Your will for my life is perfect and good. Forgive me for being angry with You.

6. After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, you might pray something like this:

"Lord, I release all these people to You, and my right so seek revenge. I choose not to hold on to my bitterness and anger, I release it to You. (Feel the release, let God have the anger.) I ask You to heal my damaged emotions and restore all that was stolen from me as a result of this sin against me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

7. Ask God how this sin against you has caused you to sin against others. Listen. Confess it and receive His forgiveness.
8. Finally, destroy the list and trust that God has begun the healing and will deal with those who have hurt you. Celebrate God's goodness in giving you this freedom!

(This is how we deal with the pain when others have hurt us. If we are the cause of someone else being hurt, we should go to that person, face to face if possible, and ask for his/her forgiveness. If restitution is needed, offer to pay or do what may be necessary. You are not responsible for their accepting your apology. He/she may not forgive you, but then that becomes a matter between him/her and God.)

Resource: Victory Over the Darkness. Neil T. Anderson. Regal Books.

