

Forgiveness

God calls us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Ephesians 4:31-32 tells us to *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every kind of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* Offering forgiveness for the wrongs that have been committed against us sets us free from our past and doesn’t allow Satan to take advantage of us.

Colossians 3:12-14 says, *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

Most people do not understand what forgiveness really is and how it has the power to release us from the pain and hurt in our lives.

- Forgiveness doesn't mean that you forget, but rather it is a choice not to use the past against the person that has been forgiven. Forgetting may be the long term by-product of forgiveness, but it is never a means towards it. We don’t heal in order to forgive; we forgive in order to heal.
- Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of the will. God tells us to forgive so we can forgive. To forgive is to set a captive free and then realize you were the captive.
- Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person’s sin. You are already living with the consequences of someone else’s sin. The only choice you have is to do it in the bondage of bitterness, or in the freedom of forgiveness.
- Forgive from the heart. Allow God to bring to the surface the painful memories and acknowledge how you feel toward those who have hurt you. If forgiveness doesn’t touch the emotional core of your life, it won’t be complete.

Don’t wait until you feel like forgiving. You will never get there. Realize that grieving the loss and disappointment is part of the process of healing, and it is necessary to grieve when you forgive.

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Forgiveness Exercise:

1. Begin by praying and asking God...Who do I need to forgive? Make a list - don't second guess any names that come to mind, write them down. You may also need to include your name on the list.
2. For each name on your list ask God - what do I need to forgive?
3. Ask God to help you recall how it felt and to be able to put it into words how it made you feel. Do some journaling and allow yourself to feel the emotions connected to the wrongs done to you.
4. You may also need to write down "Thoughts Against God" at the bottom of your list. God has not done anything wrong so He does not need to be forgiven, but you need to be able to let go of your disappointments with the way life has turned out and not harbor any resentment or bitterness towards God.
5. Begin to pray blessings on each person on your list as you allow God to soften your hearts as you forgive them
6. Sit with Jesus for each person on your list and pray, telling the Lord that you are choosing to forgive them and release them from your debt.
7. Spend some time listening to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to bring healing to painful wounds.
8. Share with others how trusting God and forgiving those who have hurt you has changed your life.

Taken from Soul Care Equipping Material produced by the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada and Neil Anderson's "The Steps to Freedom in Christ" Material

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