

FORGIVENESS

God gave us basically two ways to resolve our past hurts and betrayals and be able to move on. They are *grieving and forgiveness*. If you fail to do either one of these your past can continue to sabotage your future. Last month we talked about grieving, this month will talk about forgiveness. As a counselor I have seen people make incredible breakthroughs by forgiving, they had no idea how much their unforgiveness was affecting them so dramatically.

A good example is when I was counseling with a woman some years back who had been abused by her father for many years. He had died many years ago so we were praying together about how to proceed and we both saw the same picture. She was standing above her father's grave and the scene was like a movie. She was in an old cemetery with tilted gravestones in the winter. She started to walk away and his hand came up out of the grave and grabbed her by the ankle and she realize that her father was still controlling her life by her forgiveness. It was a powerful experience. Jesus talked a lot about the power of forgiveness.

Matthew 6:12, 14-15

*And forgive us our **debts**, as we also have forgiven our **debtors**... For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

Time doesn't heal all wounds; nothing goes away until it is resolved.

Forgiveness is a powerful biblical principal that God actually puts forth as a command. He is telling us unforgiveness can have eternal consequences. Forgiveness is important because it gives you the **ability to move on in life**. Being unforgiving can tie you to your past hurts and make it diffi cult to receive the blessings of new relationships, with Him and others. Forgiveness occurs when the one who was hurt *cancel the debt owed*. When you forgive, you free yourself from those who hurt you.

Reconciliation occurs when the perpetrator changes, apologizes, and asks for forgiveness, but it is not a requirement for you to forgive. Forgiveness is about your own freedom. Forgiving someone does not mean you have to trust the offender again, or make yourself vulnerable to be hurt by them. In many cases being able to forgive is a spiritual process. If you are willing to forgive He can make you able. The following scripture tells us that our unforgiveness will affect those around us.

Ephesians 4:31-32 [NLT]

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Hebrews 12:15

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.

Attached is the Genesis worksheet for forgiveness: if you're willing, it can help make you able. Print out the attached worksheets and then prayerfully go through the following steps on how to fill in the boxes. Make sure you first go through and challenge the false beliefs that can keep you from being *able* to forgive. When you're finish then go to the next page and go through the forgiveness prayer.

The boxes.

1. **Person:** Ask God to reveal to you the person who has hurt you and He wants you to forgive. Think about people who you still "go back to court with" in your mind.
2. **Wounds:** The things they did that hurt you: abandoned, criticized, abused, rejected, ignored, lied, betrayed, (which is probably the most common) etc. What was the wound(s)?
3. **Judgments:** The things you believe about them: e.g., they're evil, weak, selfish, stupid, lazy, didn't love me, didn't care, etc. What are your judgments? Repent of your judgments, asking God to release the person and yourself from the consequences of Matthew 7:1-2.
4. **Vows or Survival Lies** (Matthew 5:33-35): Vows can be like self-cures, mandates you told yourself to survive, e.g., "I don't need (trust) anyone," or "whatever I do, it won't be enough," or "all men/women are _____," etc. What vows/survival lies are still active in your belief system? What do you tell yourself to cope and survive the hurts? Renounce them.
5. **Effect on You:** What effect did the wound have on you (How did you cope)? Stress, anger, addiction, sex, codependency, depression, isolation, food, workaholism, etc.
6. **Their Debt:** This is the most powerful. Biblically, forgiveness means to cancel the debt. What do they owe you? What would they have to do for you to trust them again? Apologize, repent, money, make restitution, justice, change. Pray, asking the Lord to make you both willing and able to cancel their debt.

The beauty of Christ-driven forgiveness is that ultimately, it heals and releases us from the self-destructive thoughts and behaviors and fears that are the fruit of unforgiveness.

FORGIVENESS WORKSHEET

Instructions: Make a list of the people who have hurt you, starting with your parents. Then include God, siblings, teachers, friends, bosses, authority figures, wives, husbands, children, abusers, etc. It may be helpful to review Genesis Process Two, Three and Five to fill in the list. **Important:** read the instructions and example on page 188 before you begin.

Person:	Wound:	Judgment or unforgiveness:	Vow or survival lie:	Effect it had on you:	Their Debt: (What they owe you)

THE IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is important because it gives you the ability to move on in life. Unforgiveness ties you to your past hurts and makes it difficult to receive the blessings of new relationships. **Forgiveness** comes from the one hurt, by canceling the DEBT owed. There is no need for participation from the perpetrator. **Reconciliation** comes from the perpetrator, by apologizing and asking for forgiveness. You forgive to free yourself from those who hurt you.

False beliefs can hinder forgiveness. False beliefs can make you unable to forgive those that have hurt you.

False Belief	True Belief
1. If I forgive them, they will go free. There will be no justice.	1. Only God knows what is just. Punishment is in God's hands.
2. Forgiveness means I must pretend that nothing ever happened.	2. Forgiveness is not denial. Tell the truth; don't minimize it in order to forgive.
3. If I forgive, I will become vulnerable to them again.	3. Forgiving someone doesn't mean that they are safe and you must trust them again.
4. My unforgiveness is justified because I'm right, and they will never see their wrong and repent if I let go.	4. My unforgiveness only hurts me and allows what they did to control my life.

FORGIVENESS AND RELEASING — PRAYER FOR OTHERS

Go through the Forgiveness List you've made with your counselor and choose to forgive each single person specifically for how they hurt you. Use the prayer examples below as guidelines. Remember, **the key to forgiveness is in seeing people through God's eyes, and understanding that they were wounded people themselves, who projected their pain onto you and others.**

PRAYER TO FOLLOW

*"For if you forgive men
for their transgressions,
your heavenly Father
will also forgive you."
—Matthew 6:14 (NAS)*

Father, Your word says that in order to be forgiven, I must forgive. I come to You in the name of Jesus, in obedience and love, and I bring (name) _____ before You. I cancel their debt. I choose to forgive this hurt against me, and I ask that You would not hold this sin against (name) _____ on my account. I release (name) _____ from any desire on my part to see (him/her) _____ punished. In fact, as You have told me to do, I bless (name) _____ in Your Son's name, Jesus. You know (name) _____'s desires, needs, and hurts. You know what would be a blessing for (him/her) _____. I ask that You would pour out Your love and healing for (his/her) _____ life and bring (him/her) _____ your highest good, because Your name is Love and You are not willing that any would perish. Now also, Father, please heal my heart and set me free to love this person as You do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Forgiveness is letting go of negative judgments about those who have hurt you.