

Forgiveness

By: Kirsten

Overarching principle:

When someone offends/sins against you...forgive them. Do this as quickly as you want God to forgive you for your sins, for there is a direct relationship.

(Mark 11:25-26 NASB) "And whenever you stand praying, **forgive**1, if you have anything against **anyone**; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. {26}" But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions." You must never stand before God with unforgiveness in your heart. Again, Christ says, (Mat 6:14-15 NASB) "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15}" But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." And in the parable of the unmerciful servant, (Mat 18:21-35 NASB) ...{34}" And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35}" So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Forgiveness is a decision (or choice), but **not** a feeling...**don't** wait for you to feel like forgiving the person! Also, Do NOT go to them and tell them about all the ways they hurt you, that's called dumping and it only fans the flames of strife and unforgiveness...just forgive them. The offender asking you to forgive them is NOT a pre-requisite for the commands Christ gave us above.

Special case of an ongoing relationship:

However, in the case of a brother (fellow believer with whom you have a close, ongoing relationship) who hurts you/offends you/sins against you, you should tell him about it immediately for the purpose of reconciling, preventing its recurrence, and continuing a godly relationship. When your brother in Christ offends you (he may or may not know he did it) and you silently forgive him...that is very good. But if it becomes a repeated cycle, then it will become a stumbling block in the relationship, and especially for the offended.

Therefore to prevent it from becoming a cycle, the offended should bring the issue to light, then the sinner should quickly repent, and the offence should quickly be forgiven. This is definitely the model that should be used in a home, and between a man and wife.

(Luke 17:1-4 NASB) And He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! {2}" It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. {3}" Be on your guard!2 If your **brother** sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.3 {4}" And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him."

Be extremely cautious in rebuking a brother outside of the home (this special case), and examine your motives carefully.

Special case of a crime committed by a brother in Christ:

Forgiveness is very often confused with Christ's instruction on church discipline. In cases of civil crimes between believers, or similar offenses which require the sinning person to repent and make reparations or take some action, more formal action is required. In these unusual cases Christ teaches:

(Mat 18:15-17 NASB) "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. {16} "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. {17} "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."

When Christ quoted from the Law of Moses, He was referring to the part of the law that dealt with murder, and later expanded to deal with civil offenses such as moving a boundary marker...the kinds of things which require formal justice. You may note, that forgiveness is not mentioned in this passage. In this case the overarching principle applies, whether or not the brother ever repents. You forgive.

When you offend someone:

When you offend someone else (whether on purpose or not, whether justified or not) you go to them and ask them to forgive you. You may **not** justify or explain what you did...just ask for forgiveness using **all** 4 steps, below

(Mat 5:23-24 NASB) "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, {24} leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

Practical Application:

To understand the importance and the power of forgiveness, first you must realize that God gave His only son that YOU might live. He has forgiven you MUCH. The least we can do is forgive others (parents etc.) for what little they have done to us. (Eph 4:32 NASB) And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Forgiveness is a choice. **Choose it and say it out loud, "I forgive ___ for ___."**

Forgiveness is absolutely an act of the will. Many confuse the act of forgiveness with a change of emotion and therefore believe the lie that they cannot forgive. However, the truth is that the change of emotion follows the act (choice) of forgiveness.

Every time you think about or go-over how someone has failed you or has wronged you, you are sinning. Ask God to forgive you. Then change what you are thinking about. Ask God to give you His heart for this person and pray blessing on them. This will change how you feel about them over time.

When you hurt a loved one or someone you interact with regularly

(family, friends, roommates, workmates, schoolmates)

When someone does you wrong and a conflict follows, humble yourself and immediately ask them to forgive you again... no matter what. Even if you meant no harm or did nothing wrong. Most wrongs are only perceived by one in the party. This is painful sometimes because you have been wronged again and shouldn't it be their turn to ask forgiveness? I also always ask forgiveness for getting angry at someone even if they wronged me. If I have behaved poorly I ask forgiveness for being angry, not mentioning it was caused by the wrong they did me. When I ask for forgiveness I use these 4 steps, and say:

1. "What I did was wrong (or it was wrong to hurt you...)"
2. "I am sorry for doing it"
3. "I will try not to do it again"
4. "Please will you forgive me?"

If someone tells you of a wrong you have done to them immediately ask for forgiveness using the 4 steps above. If they do not forgive you that is their problem but you must forgive them for that too. Did I say this isn't easy? I believe a simple "sorry" is not enough. It gets less painful to humble yourself with time and practice. As I see how much I really do need to be forgiven in my attitude and thinking it is easier to do. Sometimes though I just do not want to do it again. I just take a deep breath and do it. I tell God about it, but he has forgiven me much more so I see that it is the least I can do.

The ideal outcome is that both parties forgive. But even if they don't you can move on in your relationship without that issues between you.

When someone does something to hurt you, you do not need to go and tell them about it...just forgive them.

When someone does or says something to hurt or offend you, always assume they do not mean to hurt you. Try not to take offence at anyone. Always assume the best of people. It is much easier to say, "I am sure he didn't mean that" rather than build a story of how much that person hurt you and then have to forgive them. You will be a much happier person living in a world of much nicer people if you think this way.

If someone close to you does the same thing day after day you may need to go to them and discuss it. Always checking your heart before you do so.

Just cry out to God with all your pain and then forgive and expect God to fill the void, heal the pain and provide for your needs. It really does work. This continues to amaze me. It even works for someone who continues to do hurtful things to you over and over.

When you choose not to forgive, you run into two problems.

First, a troubled conscience...the result of your own sin.

Second, hostility...the result of others' sin against you. One or both of these lead to anxiety and/or depression. Anxiety and/or depression can be eliminated by searching your heart for any unforgiveness against others, yourself, or God, and then forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

See also chapter on depression if feelings persist after completing forgiveness.

Forgiveness for Everyone who has hurt you over your lifetime

1. Make a list starting with your parents, siblings, spouses, in-laws, ex-significant others, mean schoolmates, co-workers, bosses etc...everyone...
2. Run everyone through once
3. Say in out loud so you can hear it.

The 7 steps to forgiving someone who has offended you. Depending on the severity of the offense and your willingness to forgive, you may not need to go through all the steps.

1. Father God I choose, as an act of my will to forgive _____. I forgive ___ for ___.
2. Father, I ask that you forgive _____ for these things as well and that you not hold these charges against him/her on my account. As I release _____, I ask you to release him/her as well.
3. Father, I ask that you forgive me for holding unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, etc. in my heart toward. I receive your forgiveness now and your cleansing of my heart from all unrighteousness.
4. Father, I also choose not to hold any unforgiveness toward You for allowing these hurts to happen to me. I forgive you because I need to, not because you need it.
5. Father God, if there are any more stored up negative feelings in me toward _____, I ask that you cleanse them from me. I will be open to replace these negative emotions with the fruit of your Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.).
6. Heavenly Father, I ask that you heal now the wounded places in my soul. Heal my memory of those offenses so that I can look back on them realistically, knowing that they were hurtful, but also knowing that you, Lord, have healed the hurt. And use those experiences for the healing of others with whom I come in contact.
7. Now, Father, I ask that you bless _____ with your abundant mercy. Prosper _____ in every way: body, soul and spirit.

(Continue to ask God to bless and prosper this person until all negative feelings toward them are healed. And each time you begin to feel anything toward them, use this as a cue to bless and intercede for them.)

If any hurtful episode or person continues to "pop" into your mind

1) Immediately capture the thought and state, "I have forgiven _____. Lord bless them".

2) Next, renew your mind by changing what you are thinking about.

A) You can go to one of your 3 already prepared happy thoughts.

B) You can thank God for what He has given you or done for you.

C) Sing a hymn or pray.

D) You can worship Him.

E) You can switch your mind to anything.

3) **Do this as many times as it takes**

Forgiveness Facts:

1. Forgiveness is a choice not a feeling. Since you aren't waiting for a feeling you can run everyone through at one time.
2. You don't have to want to forgive. You just say the words. The feelings will follow.
3. **Forgiveness is not excusing anyone's actions.** It releases you from them and their ability to hurt you day after day.
4. **The more you practice forgiveness the easier it gets**