



Head to Heart
Restoration Ministry

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The Power of Forgiveness

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.” - Corrie Ten Boom. There are few things as misunderstood and yet as powerful as forgiveness.

When we are hurt by others our natural instinct is to pull away, become angry, resentful, bitter and even vengeful. We normally do not respond with mercy, grace, understanding and forgiveness. Forgiveness goes against our nature, yet God commands us to forgive. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13. There can be no middle ground with forgiveness: either we decide to forgive the person who hurt us, or we hold on to the anger and resentment.

Forgiveness is a choice. It is a gift that you give to yourself. Forgiveness has little to do with the person who has hurt you. It is an act of faith out of obedience to God and is not dependent on your feelings. The biggest road block is that we often confuse forgiveness with condoning the action or saying the wrong they committed was OK.

Forgiveness does not deny the other person's responsibility for the hurt you have experienced nor does it justify the wrongs committed. You can forgive the person without excusing the act. The person responsible for the hurt may still have to deal with the consequences of their actions. Releasing forgiveness is not dependent upon the apology or repentance of the offender. Forgiveness does not automatically mean reconciliation of the relationship. Forgiveness can open the door for reconciliation but is not given based on the expectation that the relationship is restored.

The choice to forgive means that you let go of the resentment, anger and revenge. It allows you to overlook the wrong committed against you so that you can move forward with your life. To hold on to the hurts keeps you bound in the negative emotions and prevents you from fully engaging in other relationships. You keep others at arms length in order to isolate yourself from future hurts. Unforgiveness keeps you captive in your own judgments. You remain victimized.

Forgiveness leads to emotional healing and often has physical benefits. When we forgive we exchange the hurt, anger and resentment for peace, hope and joy. We make the choice to forgive and God gives us the gift of grace to release the hurt. There is a direct connection between our ability to receive God's forgiveness for us and our willingness to forgive others. Forgiveness has been linked to the lessening of chronic back pain, depression, reduced levels of stress and other illnesses.

Forgiveness begins with a choice but is often a process and life journey. The reality is that we do not “forgive and forget.” Forgiveness is about choosing to remember a hurtful event in a new way. It allows us the ability to remember the event without the severe sting of pain and loss. At times we have to repeatedly mentally and spiritually forgive, always taking steps to move forward into emotional wellness. It is God's love and grace that allows us to walk in forgiveness and free of the bondage of hurt, anger and resentment.



Because forgiveness is an action and not an emotion, the practical steps to forgiveness can feel contrived yet they can lead to inner peace. A simple exercise in forgiving someone who has hurt you first involves remembering an incident in which you were hurt. How has it impacted your life? Were there any actions on your part that may have contributed to the conflict? Next, take ownership for your own actions and feelings. When you reflect on the person or incident do you feel anger, hatred, judgment, etc.? Are you blaming them for your negative feelings? Last, pray and release forgiveness. Ask God to remove all anger, bitterness, resentment, feelings of vengeance, and expectations from you as well as the other person. Ask God to forgive you for your judgments and any part you might have had in the incident that may have hurt others.

Some times forgiveness is very difficult and you find yourself struggling with releasing the person that hurt you. Rather than condemning yourself, in prayer acknowledge the struggle you are having to God. Try to look at the offense through God's perspective. Reflect on the abundance of forgiveness that God has given you. If needed, seek out a Pastoral Counselor to help walk you through the process. If you are willing, God will give you the ability to step out in faith and forgive.

Forgiveness is one of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves and each other. As we forgive others, Jesus sets us free from the anger, resentment, bitterness and hurt that has held us captive. Remember, I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6.

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