

Biblical Forgiveness

(Designed for two studies: Part 1: Questions 1 to 3; Part 2: Questions 4 and 5.)

THEME –We have inadvertently adopted the world’s ideas about forgiveness, and those misunderstandings have kept us from forgiving biblically.

1) The importance of Forgiving Others:

- Matthew 6:12-15; Mark 11:25
- Matthew 18: 15 – 35 (manuscript study)

2) How do I know if I have unforgiveness in my heart?

- *I overreact to current situations on the basis of unresolved past situations. (I may not realize this, but my spouse, closest friends, or coworkers may have stumbled into areas where my reaction indicates that they touched a raw nerve.)*
- *I keep “resetting the stage” of my life with different people playing the role of a person who deeply hurt me, always hoping that this time the script will unfold differently and have a happy ending. A woman who has been abused, for example, tries different guys in the role of boyfriend, but they turn out to be abusive, too.*
- *I cannot “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep” when it comes to a particular person or group. This could apply to an individual, a general category (girls who remind me of the popular girls in high school), or people of a particular ethnicity or race.*
- *I find it much easier to criticize a person or group than to pray for them.*
- *I find that I am not experiencing freedom and joy in Christ.*
- *I am stuck or tormented (experiencing demonic oppression) in any area. When we harbor unforgiveness, we experience torment. When you encounter a tormented person, unforgiveness is likely involved.(Matthew 18:34-35)*



small groups

3) God models perfect forgiveness (*Ephesians 4:31 – 5:1*).

Forgiveness is NOT:

- a) ...calling wrong right
- b) ...ignoring or minimizing sin
- c) ...saying it didn't hurt
- d) ...the opposite of justice
- e) ...the same thing as empathizing with or understanding the offender
- f) ...forgetting what happened
- g) ...a substitute for honest confrontation and/or boundary setting (*Mt. 18:15*)
- h) ...necessarily the same thing as restoring a relationship. The other person doesn't even necessarily have to know you have forgiven them.
- i) ...necessarily the same thing as a restoration of trust or a position of trust. Forgiveness is a gift; trust must be earned.
- j) ...necessarily a removal of consequences
- k) ...dependent on the offender's repentance
- l) ...just for big offenses (*Col. 3:13*)

Instead, when God Forgives Us:

- He calls a spade a spade. (*Rom 3:23*)
- He takes sin very seriously. (*Mt 5:22, 18:6*)
- He says it hurts. (*Eph 4:30*)
- He says a price must be paid. (*Rom 6:23*)
- He doesn't confuse empathy with justice (*Luke 23:34*)
- He does not have amnesia, but He chooses not to call our sin to mind. (*Jeremiah 31:34*)
- He forgives us AND convicts us of sin (*Heb. 12:6*)
- He offers forgiveness but doesn't restore a relationship until we repent. (*Luke 15:11–32*)
- He entrusts responsibility in His church according to proven spiritual maturity. (*I Tim 3:1-13, II Tim 2:2*)
- He disciplines us and often allows us to experience consequences of sin (in this life), even when it is forgiven. (*Heb 12:6*)
- He does not wait for us to repent before He offers forgiveness. (*Luke 15:20-24*)
- He forgives ALL our sins -- of both commission and omission. (*Col. 2:13-14*)

4) What are the steps involved in biblically forgiving others?

A. Choose to ask God who I need to forgive.

It might be the obvious people (family of origin), but it might also be specific people from my past (the kid who made fun of me on the school bus), or even a broad category of people – a particular race, people who are thin and attractive, rich people, people who are more “successful” in ministry, etc. Bring each offense or complaint before God and acknowledge my unforgiveness. Open the doors to the closets in my life and ask God to bring to mind anyone **He** knows I need to forgive. Allow time for Him to speak.

Ps. 51:10; Ps 139:23-24

B. Choose to humble myself before God, recalling the magnitude of my sin against Him.

The first issue is not the magnitude of their sin against me or my sin against them, but the magnitude of my sin against holy and righteous God.

Mt. 18:32-33

C. Choose to acknowledge the hurt that resulted in my life from each offense and the righteousness of that sin being punished.

Eph. 4:26

D. Choose to allow Jesus’ death to be the payment for the sin.

A price must be paid for the sin; the question is whether I will hold onto the demand that the offender pays the price or if I will ask that Jesus’ payment on the cross be applied to this sin.

E. Choose to allow God to ultimately deal with the offender.

I choose to let go of my secret fantasies of how He will do this and leave it to Him, knowing that He WILL repay.

Romans 12:19



F. Choose to ask God to bring restoration from the wounds – whether in this life or the next.

Joel 2:23 – 25

Examples: Joseph, Job

G. Choose to ask God to show me any boundaries I should set, or any steps of discipline I should seek.

I Cor. 5:1-13

H. Choose to bless the person who offended me. Find a concrete way to bless them (or their physical or spiritual relatives).

One way to bless a person would be to fast and pray for his/her salvation. Another idea would be to donate to a ministry that is focused on reaching a group that has offended me. A person who was hurt by the jocks or popular kids in school might choose to support a ministry to athletes or Greeks, for example.

Luke 6:27; Romans 12:20-21

I. Choose to allow God to use my bad experience in ministry to others.

II Cor. 1:3-7; Genesis 50:20

5) How do I experience God's forgiveness?

A. Ask God to reveal specific areas He wants to bring to the light and heal.

Psalms 139:23-24, I Cor. 11:28

B. Confess (say the same things God says) about my sin.

I John 1:8-9

C. Admit your powerlessness to change, and ask God to transform you from the inside out. Ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Romans 6:14-25

D. Thank God for His forgiveness on the basis of Christ's death on the cross.

Don't give explanations, beg for forgiveness, or make promises to do better, but by faith simply receive His forgiveness and thank Him for it. Meditate on just how clean, pure and favored Jesus' blood has made you before God.

1 John 1:9
Psalm 103:8-12

E. Be completely honest and open with at least one wise and trustworthy Christian about your sin. Discuss concrete steps you may need to take and be ruthless in cutting off pathways where Satan has gained access into your life.

James 5:16, 1 Peter 5:8, Luke 11:24-26; Matthew 5:29-30

F. Link arms with other believers for ongoing transparent relationships and to continue to receive prayer.

1 John 1:7