



Forgiving One Another

Forgiveness is not ignoring, disregarding, tolerating, excusing, overlooking, or closing your eyes to the wrong another person has done against you. It is not letting time pass or forgetting that the offense occurred. It is not resigning ourselves to the other person's actions by saying, "that's just the way they are". Forgiveness is a deliberate action of my will – out of dependence upon Christ in me, removing from the offender his guilt toward me, giving this to God and considering the offender no longer guilty toward me.

I. Extending Forgiveness

A. Read John 17:21-23 - How many times did Jesus pray for believers to be in unity?

(3 Times)

1. How important is it to be reconciled with another person after a conflict or offense occurs? **(Very Important)**

B. Read Ephesians 4:26 - What is the time frame God gives us to work out our conflict and anger? **(Before the end of the day) (Right away)**

C. According to Ephesians 4:31-32, what are the incorrect attitudes to have toward one another? **(Bitterness, wrath, anger, quarreling, slander and malice)**

1. Using the same passage, describe the correct attitudes we should have toward one another. **(We are to show kindness to one another, be tender-hearted toward one another and forgive one another even as God has forgiven us.)**

D. Read Mark 11:25-26 and Matthew 18:21-35 and answer the following questions:

1. If someone sins against you, who is responsible to do the forgiving? **(You are)**
2. Who are you supposed to forgive? **(The person who harms you or offends you)**
3. What types of offenses are you supposed to forgive? **(All types)**
4. Are there any offenses that are too serious to be forgiven? If answering yes, please list them. **(No, however forgiveness does not negate legal consequences for the offender.)**
5. If the person who sins against you never comes and asks your forgiveness, are you still responsible to forgive them? **(Yes)**
6. When should you forgive them? **(When you are praying)**
7. If we are unforgiving, what is God's attitude toward us? **(He will not forgive us)**

When someone sins against you, there is an offense against God, an offense against society if the action was illegal, and an offense against you. You can't remove the guilt God places upon them. This can only be removed through repentance on their part. You can't remove the guilt society places on them, only society can do this. However, you are personally responsible to deal with the guilt you have placed on them. God holds you responsible to extend forgiveness toward one who sins against you.

E. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 2:5-8. What attitude did Jesus have when He went to the cross to pay for your sins? **(Jesus was willing to give His life in order to make a way for us to be forgiven, redeemed and restored.)**

1. As Jesus went to the cross to pay for our sin, it cost Him all His pride, His rights, all of His demands that the "sinner" pay for his wrong. It will cost us no less to forgive.

F. According to Proverbs 24:17-18 and Romans 12:19, who alone has the right to punish sin? **(God – We are not to seek revenge or rejoice in an offender's calamity.)**

G. Forgiveness may be painful or seem impossible but we can do what He has called us to do by the One who strengthens us. We can do it through the power of His life lived through us. We can forgive because we have the forgiver living in us. We must do what is humanly possible to forgive and allow God to complete the process in us. Perhaps God is speaking to your heart right now concerning someone you need to forgive. Take the following test of forgiveness.

1. Are you sincerely thanking God for the lessons learned during your pain?
(Romans 8:28-29) **(Note – God causes all things to work together for good ...)**
2. Can you talk about your hurt without getting angry, without feeling resentful, without thoughts of revenge? (Ephesians 4:31) **(Let go of bitterness)**
3. Are you willing to accept your part of the blame for what happened within the relationship? **(In most cases our responses contribute to painful situations.)**
4. Can you revisit the scene or the persons involved in your hurt without experiencing negative reactions? **(This takes time for healing but forgiveness leads to this.)**
5. Are you rewarding with good those who have hurt you? (Romans 12:20-21)
(A great starting place for Romans 12:20-21 is to pray for those who hurt you.)

If God is dealing with you to forgive someone, stop now and be obedient to the Holy Spirit. In prayer, tell God the actual offense committed against you and how it's affected you. Tell God you are now lifting from the offender his "responsibility" to "pay for" his wrong toward you – and that by God's grace you no longer consider the offender guilty toward you. Entrust the offense and the offender to God. Confess to God your sin of holding a grudge and ask Him to forgive and cleanse you and complete His work of perfect forgiveness in you.

II. Seeking Forgiveness

Seeking forgiveness is not just apologizing or being sorry for your wrong against another. It is the action of honestly seeing the guilt another is holding against you for your wrong actions or attitudes toward them, and acknowledging it before them without excuse and without projecting blame either toward the offended person or toward anyone else related to the incident, and then humbly asking forgiveness from the offended person.

A. Read Matthew 5:23-26 and answer the following questions:

1. When should I seek forgiveness? **(When I realize or remember that I have offended or hurt someone.)**
2. Is my worship acceptable to God if I have not put right my offense against another? Why or why not? **(No, I must at least decide to make right my wrongs against others.)**
3. When I have sinned against another, whose responsibility is it to seek forgiveness? **(It is my responsibility to seek for forgiveness.) (Note – When I am the offended I must extend forgiveness and when I am the offender I must seek forgiveness.)**

If God is speaking to your heart about going to someone and asking their forgiveness, stop now and be obedient to the Holy Spirit. Go to that person and confess your action as being wrong and sinful. Go into only as much detail as necessary for the offended person to understand what you are confessing. Do not make defenses or excuses. Do not project blame or rationalize. Your confession should lead with purpose and undue delay to, "I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

B. Your guilt against another person is also a sin against God. Read 1 John 1:6-10. What must you do to be free from the guilt God has placed on you? **(Confess our sin to God)**

C. After you have sought forgiveness, what are you free to do? (Matthew 5:24)

(Present your offering (worship) to God.)

SUMMARY: If Jesus was willing to lay down all of His desires, ambitions and rights to forgive us, we can do no less than to forgive one another.