

FORGIVENESS

CHANGES EVERYTHING



*“Keep changing.
When you’re through changing,
you’re through.”*

Bruce Fairfield Barton

*“All growth that is not toward God
is growing to decay.”*

George Macdonald

Forgiveness changes everything. It changes us from the inside out. *It changes how we view ourselves:* No longer are we under condemnation. No longer are we defined by our past mistakes. We are forgiven. We are washed clean. We are called God’s children. *It changes the way we speak to one another:* When we are forgiven, we are called to be an encouragement to others. No longer are we in competition with each other. We are one body with different parts, doing different jobs, making up one whole. *It changes how we react to insult and injury:* No longer are we angry and unforgiving. Because we have been forgiven, we will forgive those who have hurt us. Forgiveness changes everything. If you are not changing from who you were when you were still in your sins, then maybe you need to go back to repentance. Because if you are not changing, you are still living in the sins that God says we need to put aside.

FORGIVENESS CHANGES HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES

This concept needs to be the first one that we understand because it changes everything about us. Before we experienced forgiveness, we didn't always make the right choices. The guilt and shame of those past mistakes can eat away at the peace of our present and the success of our future if we don't learn to forgive ourselves and let go of the condemnation of those sins. Romans 8:1 tells us, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Please read 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.

If we regard ourselves from a worldly point of view, what are some ways that we measure our worth or success?

From a worldly viewpoint, how does our past affect the outcome of our future?

This verse says we are not look at ourselves in this worldly way. We have been changed and made new from who we once were! What does verse 17 say about our past?

How does this speak freedom to you in your life?

FORGIVENESS CHANGES HOW WE SPEAK TO OTHERS

In Matthew 12:34-35, Jesus teaches, “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” Before we come to the Lord and are forgiven of our sins, our hearts are hardened and filled with selfishness and evil. That evil ekes out of our heart and seasons the words we speak to others. Our motives reflect the condition of our heart and inspires the way we speak to others.

To understand what God does to our corrupted heart when we turn back to him, please read Ezekiel 36:25-27.

What does it mean to you to be washed clean by God?

Describe a “heart of stone”?

Describe a “heart of flesh”?

How does the condition of your heart affect the way you speak to others?

FORGIVENESS CHANGES HOW WE REACT

This concept may be the most challenging for us to consistently live out. While we are a forgiven and changed people, we are still people. The human part of our personalities instinctively retaliates to being hurt. Lashing back may be more of a reflex than a decision. But forgiving and being kind to people who are not kind to us most definitely is a choice that we make. That is what sets us apart from the rest of the world. Think about it. If Jesus had never come to earth, if the cross had never been a reality, we would still be living by the code which taught, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. Forgiveness changes the way we deal with the people who have hurt us because it goes completely against what makes sense from a worldly viewpoint.

What is the hardest part for you of forgiving someone that has hurt you?

Please read Colossians 3:12-14.

Why should we choose to deal with others with compassion, kindness and forgiveness?

How does love bind together compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience?

Please read 1 Peter 2:1-3.

What kind of behaviors towards others are we supposed to get rid of?

How could these attitudes and behaviors reflect that we haven't truly turned away from our pasts?

Forgiveness truly does change everything. It changes the way we look at ourselves and how we treat others. When we allow the realization that God set aside his home in heaven to walk on this messed up earth just to teach us how to live... when we feel the depth of his love for us, and for every other complicatedly messed-up sinner in this world, as he willingly held out his hands and took the nails in our place... as we feel the power of his resurrected command to love the world and share with everyone his forgiveness... we can't possibly believe the lie that we aren't important any more. We can't possibly believe that we are the only one who gets a second chance. We can't possibly believe that there isn't enough grace on that cross for the entire world. We can't possibly believe that we are limited by our past. God says we are something new, that none of our past mistakes and struggles and failures define us any longer. If God says that, who are we to disagree. We need to remind ourselves that we are not our past any longer, and the people we meet are either on the same journey or they need to be. We need to practice viewing ourselves, as well as the lost, through the eyes of God. We are all his children. We are precious. We are God's masterpiece! We are more than we once were and we are still not as good as we will be. We are growing ever closer to our savior each day. We are changed because we are forgiven.