

FORGIVENESS

Needs to be Shared!



*“As we practice the work of forgiveness
we discover more and more that
forgiveness and healing are one.”*

Agnes Sanford

*“When you forgive,
you in no way change the past –
But you sure do change the future.”*

Bernard Meltzer

Forgiveness was never meant to be something that we kept hidden and guarded selfishly. Forgiveness is meant to be shared with those around us. God has given us such a wonderful gift. How can we possibly keep it to ourselves!?! The freedom that we experience in forgiveness will set others free as well. Not only should we tell everyone about the forgiveness that we enjoy, but we need to show them what that forgiveness looks like by forgiving them with the same heart and attitude that we receive forgiveness from God. The forgiveness that God poured out on mankind was undeserved and was given without a cost. That is the type of forgiveness that God calls us to share with others. When we forgive the people that have hurt us, not only does it affect their love and shows them the love of God, but it affects our own lives by setting us free from the bondage of bitterness and resentment.

God Forgave US and COMMANDS US to Forgive Others

This command to forgive the people who hurt us is a common theme throughout the Bible. Again and again, God shows us that our forgiveness is directly tied to the proportion with which we forgive others. For example, please read Matthew 6:14

What does God promise to those who forgive the people who sin against us?

What is the result of unforgiveness on our part?

Why do you think that God ties our forgiveness to the way we forgive others?

Please read Colossians 3:12-14.

Why should we choose to behave differently according to verse 12?

How are we to behave?

Why are these qualities essential for forgiving others?

Which one of these qualities is the easiest for you? Which one is the hardest?

Why do you think Paul wrote that love binds all these qualities and abilities together?

WHEN WE FORGIVE OTHERS WE SHOW GOD'S FORGIVENESS TO THEM

Showing love through forgiveness is an opportunity to touch a life with the love of God. It may not be easy and it may not be pleasant, but offering forgiveness to the people who have hurt us can completely change their life. (Not to mention our own!)

The story of Paul's conversion from a Christian persecutor to a leader in the faith is a great example of God's forgiveness towards us even when we are "still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1). But, it also has a great example of forgiveness from a Christian to the man who has arrested and sentenced many Christians to death. Please read Acts 9:10-22.

What was Ananias' initial response to God telling him to go to Saul?

Why did it require Ananias to forgive Saul for him to go and give Saul back his sight?

How do you think things might have happened differently if Ananias or the disciples had refused to forgive Saul for the terrible things he had done to their friends and family?

What was the result of Saul's encounter with Christ and his forgiveness by both Ananias and the disciples?

Have you ever experienced a time when someone forgave you and it touched your heart? Explain how you felt and why it was so important to you.

FORGIVING OTHERS SETS OUR HEARTS FREE

Holding on to the bitterness and pain of the hurt that others have inflicted upon our lives only damages our own heart. The person who has hurt us often has no idea or care that we are continually reliving that pain. While they have moved on with their lives, we are stuck in the past and entangled in the chains of unforgiveness.

How can holding on to the pain of our hurts affect our present and our future?

How can we learn to let go and forgive?

The Bible tells us to go to the person we have a problem with and talk about our issues. If they repent, the relationship is restored. But, what about the ones that don't repent? What about the people we cannot speak to? How are we to handle those situations? Well, the Bible is not silent on those issues. While we are told that we are to forgive our brothers when they sin against us, we are also told how to respond to the ones who are not our brothers but rather our enemies.

Please read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:43-48.

How are we to treat our enemies?

Why do you think Jesus commands us to do this?

How can praying for the people who have wronged us make it easier for us to forgive them?

In Mark 11:25, Jesus told us, “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Use this space to express your feelings and release your pain and hurt. Ask God to help you forgive the people who have hurt you. If possible, communicate your hurt and forgiveness to the person who has harmed you. If that is not possible or safe, pour it out to God and let go of the bitterness that poisons your heart.