

FORGIVING OTHERS

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

Heb. 12:15

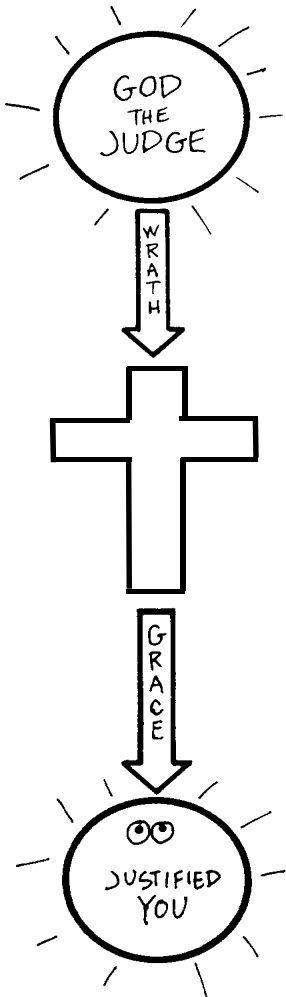
- I. Forgiveness is:
 - A. “Dying to self” by releasing an offender from your bitterness and/or wrath, which he may deserve
 - B. Giving the offender mercy as Christ gives you mercy, instead of the wrath you deserve
 - C. Changing your attitude toward the offender when you *realize* how great God’s love and forgiveness is toward you, an offender
- II. Forgiveness also is:
 - A. A decision of the will
 - B. Not based on your feelings
 - C. **A three-fold commitment to God and the offender:**
 - 1. “I will not bring up the transgression to the offender” (unless admonishment is needed).
 - 2. “I will not bring up the transgression to others” (by gossiping or “venting”).
 - 3. “I will not dwell on the transgression myself” (by having a pity-party).
- III. The forgiven must forgive. (Matt. 18:21-35)
- IV. God explains various aspects of His command to forgive.
 - A. **When** do you forgive? (Mark 11:25) In prayer
 - B. **Whom** do you forgive? (Mark 11:25) Anyone you have anything against
 - C. **How** are you to forgive? (Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:12-14)
 - 1. As Christ has forgiven you
 - 2. Completely
 - 3. Repeatedly for the same sins

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- D. **What** are God’s responses to your choices, to forgive or not to forgive? (Matt. 6:14,15)
1. God forgives you in a “fellowship relationship” to Him, when you forgive others. (Matt. 6:14)
 2. Your “positional relationship,” in which you are forgiven for every past, present and future sin, remains unchanged. However, your fellowship with God is definitely hindered when you do not forgive. See *Positional/Fellowship* diagram for further explanation. (Matt. 6:15)
- E. **How** do you respond to an offender who seeks reconciliation? (Luke 17:3,4)
1. With daily forgiveness, repeated forgiveness, limitless forgiveness
 2. Without judgment, because love “***believes all things.***” (1 Cor.13:7 NASB)
- V. It is necessary to forgive in the following situations:
- A. When someone seeks your forgiveness, make the commitment to forgive and grant forgiveness immediately. (Luke 17:3,4)
- B. When forgiveness has not been sought by the offender, in prayer say, “I forgive (name of offender) for (the specific offense).” (Mark 11:25)
- C. If there have been multiple offenses over an extended period of time, it is **highly** recommended that you pray, making the commitment to forgive in the presence of a witness. (Gal. 6:2)
1. Make an individual list for *each* person who sinned against you (mother, father, spouse, child and other people).
 2. List **specific** ways that the person sinned against you or hurt you.
 - a. Include character traits that are sinful, such as being arrogant, petty, withdrawn, critical, controlling, selfish and superficial.
 - b. Include other sinful patterns, such as not loving you unconditionally, being an ungodly role model, not turning to God and His Word to solve problems.
 - c. Include *specific* events or incidents that bring resentment to your mind.
 - d. Include things that are not necessarily sin, such as irritating habits. Refer to the checklists at the end of the *Pride and Rebellion* and the *Fear* studies, which will give you more ideas to further develop your list of how the offender sinned against you.

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POSITIONAL RELATIONSHIP



The perfect Judge pours out the punishment for your sin on Jesus Christ.

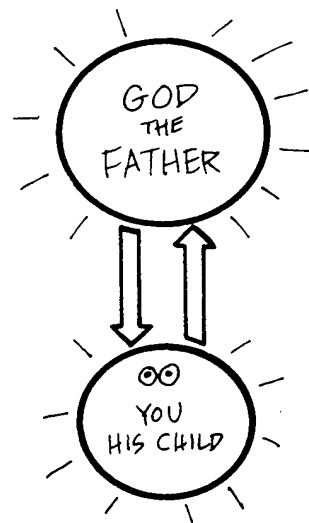
You are justified by faith alone in Christ's finished work on the cross.

Justification is a legal term meaning to be declared innocent or just.

You are forgiven for every past, present, and future sin. (Col. 2:13b)

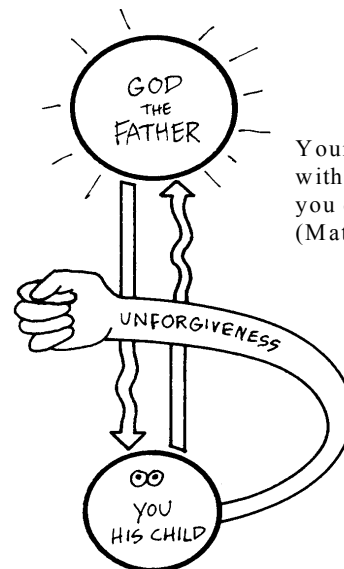
Your positional relationship with God is secure for eternity. (1 Pet. 1:3,4)

FELLOWSHIP RELATIONSHIP



Your positional relationship as a Christian places you in fellowship with your heavenly Father.

BUT



Your fellowship relationship with God is hindered when you do not forgive others. (Matt. 6:14,15)

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3. Pray to forgive each specific offense individually, e.g., “I forgive my father for his drunkenness;” “I forgive my father for not encouraging me or praising my efforts.”
 4. Tear up your list so you do not keep a “record of wrongs.” (1 Cor. 13:5)
 5. Implement this process whenever you are having a difficult time forgiving an offender, after having made a commitment in private.
- VI. The commitment to forgive must *be acted upon* in order to be set free and remain free from bitterness. (John 8:31b,32)
- A. Practice implementing the three-fold commitment to forgive on the first page of this lesson.
 - B. “Put off” dwelling on the past sins of others against you. (Is. 43:18,19; Phil. 3:13,14)
 - C. Act on the commitment to forgive by practicing the use of *Renewing Your Mind Memory Outline* whenever resentment or self-pity returns. (Eph. 4:30; Phil. 4:8,9)
 - D. Act on the commitment to forgive by learning to love your enemies or offenders. (Rom. 12:17-21; Luke 6:22-38)
 - E. Forgive the offender again when the same offense is repeated.
- VII. Follow the outline below *at the time* you are facing a difficult situation with an offender.
- A. When an offender has lost control of his anger, is offending you or hurting you in some other way
 - B. When someone ignores you or fails to do what you desire
 - C. When faced with a difficult person, utilize this outline to help you *think* before responding, rather than to *react* sinfully in the tense/hurtful situation.

1-2-3-4-5 MEMORY OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 10:13

1. **Grab hold** of the truth that God has ordained this situation. (Eph. 1:11)
2. **Thank** God for this difficulty. (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20)
3. **Forgive** the offender, not verbally, but in prayer. (Mark 11:25)
4. **Ask:** “How can I obey God in this situation?” (John 14:15)

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5. **Ask:** “What is God trying to teach me?”

VIII. There are other points related to forgiving.

- A. Do not **verbally** grant forgiveness to another *until it is sought*, but you must forgive the offender in prayer.
- B. Forgive an offender *before* admonishing him, if rebuke is needed, so you can speak the truth in love. (Eph. 4:15)
- C. Discipline, in various forms, may be appropriate even though you have forgiven.
- D. Trust in the offender after forgiving him, may or may not be appropriate, depending on whether or not his character is trustworthy.
- E. Forgiveness *may* include forgetting.
 - 1. You may not forget if the offenses had a big impact on your life or the offenses occurred over a long duration.
 - 2. God says, “***I will . . . remember*** (bring to recall) ***their sins no more.***” (Heb. 8:12) God does not say He forgets, but He does not hold the sin against you nor bring it up again. (Heb. 10:17)

You need to realize that you will be sinned against frequently in the course of your life because all people sin. Develop an awareness of signs, which indicate that you have not forgiven someone who offended you.

IX. There are ways to detect unforgiveness.

- A. There are definite **warning signs** when you have not forgiven. One or more of the following may be manifested:
 - 1. Struggling with disobedience to God without gaining consistency in your spiritual growth
 - 2. Having a persistent anger problem, outward or inward
 - 3. Blaming others for your problems
 - 4. Being moody or frequently depressed
 - 5. Suppressing and “stuffing” feelings; minimizing or excusing others’ sins
 - 6. Being very superficial in relationships
 - 7. Withdrawing emotionally or physically from others

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8. Having negative, ungrateful attitudes toward God, situations and others
9. Gossiping and/or “venting” to others about the offender(s)
10. Sensing God’s presence is far from you; fellowship with God is hindered
11. Dwelling on self-pity; feeling victimized
12. Having difficulty forming and maintaining close, meaningful relationships
13. Excusing your sinful **responses** toward others’ offenses
14. Retreating into fantasy to cover the painful realities of others’ offenses

B. There may be several reasons for the above attitudes.

1. You have not attempted to forgive.
2. You do not know *how* to truly forgive.
3. You have made the commitment to forgive, but your forgiveness is incomplete.
 - a. There may be a need for someone to bear your burdens by being a witness to your prayer of forgiveness. (Gal. 6:2)
 - b. You may have to be more specific and detailed about incidents and traits for which you are forgiving the offender.
4. You have truly forgiven, but you have other deep-rooted sins, such as fear of rejection, not accepting God’s plan for your life, not trusting God, etc., which foster sinful attitudes. See *Anger*.
5. You have not **acted** on your commitment to forgive.
 - a. You continue to dwell on the transgressions against you.
 - b. You do not practice renewing your mind.
6. You do not keep current by forgiving new or repeated offenses daily.

X. **Suppression** is Satan’s counterfeit for forgiveness.

A. Signs of suppression

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1. You deny and block emotional pain and/or bitterness. You may reach the point where you can no longer identify your sinful emotions.
2. You minimize, ignore, excuse and/or cover up the offender's sin.
3. You may believe you have forgiven because you do not *feel* angry, embittered or resentful. Instead, you have suppressed or "stuffed" your emotions.

B. Solution to suppression

1. Draw on Christ's resources and obey His command to forgive rather than resorting to your own sinful mental strategies for coping. Refer to the first and fourth boxes of *Four Approaches to a Problem* diagram in the *Introduction*.
2. List ways you were/are sinned against even though you have no responsive sinful feelings. Be willing to face emotional pain, which may surface when you write your list or when you make the commitment to forgive.

XI. Anger and bitterness, even if suppressed, will control your life if you do not forgive. (Heb. 12:15)

A. God clearly lays out **consequences** in the Bible for sin of not forgiving.

1. Your relationship with God will be hindered. (Matt. 6:14,15)
2. You grieve the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30)
3. Your relationships with others will be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)
4. You will reap trouble. (Heb. 12:15)
5. You will be turned over to the torture or imprisonment of your own unforgiving spirit. (Matt. 18:34)

B. Whatever controls you is "lord" of your life. If anger controls you, the offender ultimately controls your emotions.

C. You may react sinfully toward

1. the offender.
2. those who remind you of the offender.
3. those who have no direct bearing on the situation. (Heb. 12:15)

D. You may take on the sinful characteristics of the offender.

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- E. Your refusal to forgive should cause you to examine your salvation. (Heb. 12:15a; 2 Cor. 13:5-8)

“Not to forgive is to be imprisoned by the past, by old grievances that do not permit life to proceed with new business. Not to forgive is to yield oneself to another’s control. If one does not forgive then one is controlled by the other’s initiatives and is locked into a sequence of act and response, of outrage and revenge, tit for tat, escalating always. The present is endlessly overwhelmed and devoured by the past. Forgiveness frees the forgiver. It extracts the forgiver from someone else’s nightmare.”

Taken from a *Time* magazine article entitled, “I Spoke...As a Brother”

***“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
In your struggle against sin,
you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”
Heb. 12:3,4***

XII. Your commitment to forgive may or may not be followed by an immediate release of bitter feelings.

- A. Your willingness to *act* on your commitment by renewing your mind will bring emotional freedom as the Holy Spirit works within you. (John 8:31,32; Jas. 1:25)
- B. Your sinful feelings will usually change to godly ones as you persevere in keeping God’s commands. (Gal. 6:9)
- C. Your obedience, demonstrated by forgiving and by renewing your mind, will lead to:
1. Sinful emotions no longer being present when the offender or offense comes to mind
 2. Sinful emotions no longer being present when you are in the offender’s presence
 3. Your past no longer controlling your present or future
 4. Your demonstration of unconditional love toward the offender
 5. Ceasing to suppress, excuse or fantasize to avoid the feelings of anger
 6. Focusing on God, rather than on the offender and the offense
 7. Developing compassion for the offender
 8. Seeing how God has used the offender as a tool for your spiritual growth and perhaps, how He used the adversity to broaden your ministry

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**Your great hope lies in not focusing on the degree
of the problems you have suffered, but on the ability
of the Holy Spirit to free you from the past, as you obey God's Word.**