

Forgiving Yourself and Others

How do you respond when people betray you? Do you get offended and vow never to speak to them again? The world teaches us that it's our right to hate the ones who hurt us, yet God commands forgiveness. In fact, the Bible warns that our souls will remain under condemnation, inside the kingdom of darkness, until we are willing to forgive those who sin against us.

“If you forgive men when they sin against you, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14-15

God is offering you a great exchange at the cross, but it is definitely a package deal. You cannot be a recipient of God's grace, and then withhold it from others. That is called falling from grace. If you want Jesus to take the punishment you deserve for your sins against others, then you have to also let Jesus take the punishment for your enemies' sins against you.

“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Matthew 18:32-35

This is serious. Whenever you hold a grudge against someone, YOU are choosing to remain subject to torment in the kingdom of darkness. No doubt, this is why Jesus says you should forgive others as often as you are hurt.

“Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?” Jesus replied, “Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven.” Matthew 18:21-22

God's Word even warns us to sort out our anger before the end of the day, so we don't risk exposure to evil.

“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” Ephesians 4:26-27

God is not asking you to forgive people because it is a noble thing to do. God is instructing you to forgive for your own protection. God wants you abiding in His Kingdom surrounded by His grace and protection, but the devil wants you imprisoned inside of hatred and bitterness so he can continue to torment you.

Unforgiveness is one of the devil's most cunning ways of gripping your soul.

- First he instigates someone to do or say something hurtful or offensive to you.
- Then he begins bombarding your mind with accusations about that person's cruel nature, until you are so offended that you turn from grace, and fall down into the pit of unforgiveness.

PEOPLE ARE NOT YOUR PROBLEM

Jesus was always keenly aware of the spiritual realm and the deceptive tactics of the enemy. He knew he was at war with an unseen force, and not people. People are never our real problem. It is the fallen nature of man, inspired by the demonic realm which causes every dilemma in our lives.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12

Remember when Peter told Jesus not to go to the cross? (Matthew 16:22) Peter’s advice could have caused Jesus to fail His whole life’s purpose, if He had taken it. But notice how Jesus didn’t waste time arguing with Peter. Jesus knew Peter was temporarily blinded by the demonic realm operating through him. So much so, that when Jesus turned to Peter, He addressed Satan directly,

“Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:23

In Jesus’ most devastating hour on the cross, He was still able to see that people were not to be blamed. He publicly prayed, “Father forgive them. They know not what they do.” What an infuriating moment for the demonic realm. No matter how horrific the people were to Jesus, He continued to lay down His life for them, without offense.

When wicked and offensive situations happen to you, your first line of defense is to ignore every evil thought assaulting your mind about another person’s behavior. Instead of listening to the devil’s accusations, turn to God and pray for His Spirit to fill you. It is Jesus’ Spirit in you that gives you the power to turn the other cheek. No matter what hell sends your way, God wants you to refuse hatred. Jesus said:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who insult you and persecute you...” Matthew 5:44

Are you ready to defeat the devil’s next attack against you by praying for your enemy? The kingdom of darkness is trying to hijack you back into darkness, and destroy your relationships in the process. You must deny them that victory. If you are struggling with a desire for revenge, take revenge on the devil and forgive the people he uses to come against you. **I’m convinced nothing can deliver a bigger blow to the demonic realm than genuine forgiveness.**

By now it should be clear that unforgiveness is not an option. Yet we’ve all done it. I don’t know anyone who hasn’t been tricked by the devil into hating someone. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to help you release the hatred that is imprisoning you in darkness. After you identify areas of unforgiveness, you’ll have an opportunity to let go of all those offenses and bury them at the cross. The unforgiveness section of the wall between you and God will be instantly removed as you choose to extend God’s amazing grace to your enemies.

Many tormenting physical ailments are rooted in unforgiveness. Below is a list of symptoms that indicate there is buried pain in your life. Please check the ones that apply to you.

Anxiety _____ Anger _____ Rage _____ Depression _____ Headaches _____

Bitterness _____ Stomach Problems _____ Sleeplessness _____

Feeling a need to escape through alcohol, over-eating, television, or over-sleeping _____

Recurring Nightmares _____ Sadness _____ Low self-esteem _____

Addictions _____ Manipulating people or circumstances to avoid pain _____

The good news is that as you forgive others, you will be raised up out of the darkness of condemnation and torment, and could very possibly experience a physical or mental healing as a result.

Please take this lesson slowly, so you can thoroughly identify and release all offenses. As always, invite the Holy Spirit to work with you on each question.

PRAY: Jesus, I invite you to expose every evil deposit of hatred within me. I want You to create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. I trust You, and I invite You to do a complete work. Please give me the grace to be thorough and honest as I go through this lesson. In Jesus' powerful name, I pray. Amen.

Forgiving Others

The following list of questions will help identify areas of unforgiveness of which you may or may not be aware. For example, sometimes there are events from our childhoods that we laugh about now, but which devastated us at the time. These areas may still require some forgiveness on your part. If an old memory flashes into your mind, even if it seems insignificant, let the Holy Spirit help you unpack it. Once you have identified areas of unforgiveness, you will work with the Lord through a two-step process of cleansing and healing later in this chapter.

As always, your answers are just between you and God. If you are working in a group, you should not be expected to share anything personal unless you choose to. If you do choose to share, do not disclose names or any details that would dishonor another person.

Holy Spirit, am I ever flashing back to something that has been done against me? If yes, what is it?

Am I keeping any record of wrongs? If yes, what are they?

Am I wishing bad circumstances on anyone so they can learn a lesson? Whom and why?

Does the thought of seeing any particular person from my past make me nervous or

uncomfortable? Whom and why?

Is there anyone I currently don't want to be in the same room with? Whom and why?

Holy Spirit, is there anyone I secretly or openly wish to confront? Whom and for what reason?

Am I making negative comments about anyone behind his/her back? Whom and why?

Holy Spirit, are there other areas of unforgiveness that you want to bring to my mind that I

Step One – Pour out your heart to God

Use the **Forgiveness Worksheet** on the next page to answer the following questions for each person with whom you have an issue:

- The name of the person who hurt you: _____
- The issue that occurred (in two or three words): _____
- God’s revelation to you regarding this issue: _____
- I have forgiven them (check one) yes _____ not yet _____

After you have it filled out, take your **Forgiveness Worksheet** into your private time with God. Let God hear the issues of your heart regarding each situation. Just speak it out to Him. Be very detailed and graphic until you access the most painful aspect of each situation. God can handle your emotions of rage and hatred. So, tell it like it is.

As you pour out your feelings to God, expect to hear back from Him. Write down what you hear from God on your worksheet. Bring your **Forgiveness Worksheets** into your prayer time every day until you have discussed each person with God.

King David is our Biblical example of how and why we should pour out our pain and complaints directly to God. The Bible says when we pour out our hearts to God, He shows us the way:

“I pour out my complaint before Him; before Him I tell my trouble. When my spirit grows faint within me, it is You who know my way.” Psalm 142:2-3

The astonishing truth is, when you make your heart vulnerable before your Creator, you position yourself to receive His divine revelation and love. God is ready to release healing directly into any area that you expose to Him. I pray you make it a regular practice to interact with God in a genuine and intimate way.

Inheritance Alert – A Direct Relationship With God!

Jesus made it possible for every believer to have a direct relationship with God. To be given access to the Creator of the Universe is a mighty inheritance. As a believer in Jesus, you are invited to know the One who has THE RIGHT ANSWER to every question or problem you could ever ask or face. You draw on this inheritance by faith. Start by setting aside time each day to spend with your Creator. The Word says:

“...He will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

That means He’s right there with you, now. So stop ignoring Him. Tell Him exactly how you feel. Seek His advice. Ask questions. Listen for His answers. The more of your heart you share with God, the closer you’ll get to Him. Your ability to have direct access to God makes you the wealthiest person on the planet. Praise the Lord!!!

Forgiveness Worksheet

(THIS SHOULD BE A SEPARATE WORKSHEET handed out by the leader)

Name of the person: _____

Issue in two or three words: _____

God's revelation to you regarding this issue: _____

I have forgiven them yes _____ not yet _____

Name of the person: _____

Issue in two or three words: _____

God's revelation to you regarding this issue: _____

I have forgiven them yes _____ not yet _____

Name of the person: _____

Issue in two or three words: _____

God's revelation to you regarding this issue: _____

I have forgiven them yes _____ not yet _____

Name of the person: _____

Issue in two or three words: _____

God's revelation to you regarding this issue: _____

I have forgiven them yes _____ not yet _____

Step Two – See your attack from a spiritual perspective

In order for most people to truly forgive, they need a higher perspective. It is extraordinarily helpful to see your attack/situation from the spirit realm. Once you see the devil's actions that were inspiring, and moving through the person who trespassed against you, you will feel more empowered to transfer your anger and hatred to the kingdom of darkness, where it belongs.

God is not asking you to forgive the demons who instigated this attack. He's only asking you to forgive the person they used to come against you. Keep in mind that we live in a fallen world and we've all been used by the devil to commit sins against others. Now, let's turn back to your Forgiveness Worksheet and begin with the first name.

- Holy Spirit, will you please show me which demonic spirits were surrounding or acting upon (name the person) _____ on the day/days they did this to me.
- What was the devil's purpose in using (name the person) _____ to attack me in this way?

Hopefully, after seeing your situation from the realm of the spirit, you have received the grace and mercy necessary to release the one who "wronged" you. If you are still not able to forgive your enemy, then pray the following prayer:

PRAYER: Lord, I invite You to continue showing me this situation from Your perspective, until I can release all deposits of hatred I feel in my heart against (name the person) _____. Open my eyes to see that I do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12) In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

When you are ready to let go of all hatred for your former enemy, here is a prayer for you to say to God. Feel free to add to this prayer as the Holy Spirit leads you:

PRAYER: Lord, I realize the devil just wants me to hate (name the person) _____ and when I hate him/her the devil wins. I refuse to let the devil win by trapping me inside hatred. Therefore, by an act of my will I choose to forgive (name the person) _____ for all his/her demonically inspired words and actions towards me. I release (name the person) _____ from any debt that I believed they owed me. I hand this entire situation over to You, Lord. Thank You for healing me of all the emotional and physical side-effects of carrying unforgiveness in my heart. I ask for grace to refuse hatred in the future. I invite You to continue to bring to mind anyone I have not yet forgiven. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen!

Now sit back, and let Jesus wash your heart clean of all hatred. God never wanted you to be inside that evil prison.

Asking God to Forgive You

Great Job!! Now that you aren't demanding payment and revenge for those who trespassed against you, you can receive Jesus' payment for all your debts for trespassing against others. Good bye, tormentors. Hallelujah!!!

PRAYER: According to Your Word, You were crushed for all our transgressions, and took everyone's punishment, so that we might be able to live in peace knowing that you have already paid the price for all our mistakes.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5

Jesus, I gratefully receive Your full payment for my transgressions. I now realize that in exchange I must see you as having received the punishment for everyone who transgresses against me in the future. I ask you to continue to allow Your Spirit of forgiveness to flow through me to others, so I won't fall back into the hands of the tormentors.

Forgive Yourself

Now that you've forgiven others and received God's payment for your sins, it's time to forgive yourself. Forgiving yourself is vital because the devil will still have legal right to torment you if you do not extend that same grace to yourself.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, show me the areas in my life where I have asked your forgiveness but now I need to forgive myself.

If you are having trouble forgiving yourself in any area, then use the same strategy that helped you forgive others. Ask God to show you what was happening from a spiritual perspective at the time that you sinned.

PRAYER: Holy Spirit will you please show me the demonic spirits that were assigned to surround me and drive me to commit this sin?

Wait on God, and see the scene. Write down any thoughts below.

Let the Holy Spirit fill you with God's compassion for the battle you were in. You will know you have actually forgiven yourself when you feel compassion for yourself instead of self-hatred.

PRAYER FOR FORGIVING YOURSELF:

Father, because you have forgiven me, I choose to forgive myself for all the ways I have hurt others and the ways I have hurt myself. I choose to forgive and release myself for all the mistakes I have made and the sins I have committed. I choose to love and accept myself just as You love and accept me, Lord. In the Name of Jesus I pray. Amen!

Asking others for Forgiveness

God loves reconciliation. So, in this exercise you are going to let the Holy Spirit bring to your mind anyone from your past or present to whom He wants you to be reconciled. In Bill Gothard's Basic Youth Conflict Seminar, he mapped out a process of reconciliation that is very powerful. It begins by quietly interacting with the Holy Spirit in the following manner:

PRAYER: Holy Spirit, is there anyone who can say about me, "That person is not a good person. Stay away from them."? Or in other words is there anyone you want me to apologize to? Write the names that come to mind.

Next take out a piece of paper and:

- 1. Write down the offense that occurred between you and the first person on your list. Be brief so as not to spend time dwelling on it.**
- 2. Now stop and think only about what YOU did to that person.**
- 3. Ask God to let you see the incident from that person's perspective.**
- 4. Then ask God to break your heart about what you did to them.**
- 5. Finally ask God to guide you in setting up the right time to apologize to that person.**

Asking people to forgive you is not only hard, but also not always possible. If the person is no longer alive, then speak your apology to God, and trust Him to make it right. If you need to apologize for a particularly painful situation, be aware that the person you need to apologize to may not want to hear from you. If you believe you could contact them and apologize without causing them more pain, than make an effort to get in touch with them.

It's usually best to apologize in person. If that is not possible, you can write the person a letter or call him/her on the phone. Never expect people to forgive you or to even respond to your apologies. Just do your part by admitting that you were wrong, and ask for forgiveness. How people respond to you is between them and God. After you apologize, your part is done.

If you do not know how to locate someone from your past, ask God to bring him/her across your path. If God wants you to apologize, He will orchestrate miraculous circumstances to bring you in touch with that person.

Construction Zone – SLOW DOWN

Jesus is here to remove the section of the wall between you and God that contains lies regarding forgiveness. Remember it is the lies in your belief-system that distance you from God. Therefore renouncing these lies brings you into more intimate contact with Your Lord and Savior.

Lord,

- **I renounce the lie that specific people are my enemies. The truth is my real enemy is a wicked spiritual force determined to operate through anyone around me who is vulnerable and unsuspecting. When I blame people, I do exactly what the devil wants me to do.**
- **I renounce the lie that I can receive God's grace and yet deny extending that same grace to others. The truth is if I don't forgive others, than I am choosing to live under condemnation, and forfeit my own right to grace.**
- **I renounce the lie that holding a grudge against someone else doesn't put me in harms way. The truth is there are numerous problems that can occur when I choose hatred, instead of abiding in the protection of God's grace.**

If you are now able to release your enemies and believe it is more blessed to overlook an offense, then a very large section of the wall between you and God has definitely been removed. Congratulations!

Praise The Lord.

This was a big lesson and if you were honest and worked diligently with the Holy Spirit you should be experiencing a new sense of peace in your heart. Take a moment, and tell the Lord how you have been blessed by extending forgiveness to others.

Private Practice

Every time something unjust happens to you, practice smiling and say, “I refuse to forfeit God’s grace by becoming offended.”

“A man's good sense makes him slow to wrath, and the overlooking of wrong doing is his glory.” Proverbs 19:11

No matter how many times the devil tries to replay any unjust incident in your life, guard your heart and say, “Devil, you’re the one who really attacked me. And you’re the one I’m going to get even with by refusing to hate the person you used. In fact, I am going to pray for the ones you use to hurt me, and I’m going to bless their lives.”

Have a great week repaying evil with good!