



FORGIVENESS

that Frees the Heart!

*"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. He forgive all my sins and heals all my diseases..."
Ps. 103: 2-3 (also Ja. 5: 15)*

"For if you forgive people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matt. 6: 14-15

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..."
2 Cor. 5: 17-18*

*"We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."
1 Jn. 4: 19-20*

Learning to forgive someone is a **process**. It begins with the conscious commitment of our will to submit to the movement of Christ's forgiving love in our life. Don't strive to *feel* love for the offender. It is healthier to admit our powerlessness to love our "enemy" and then yield the situation/hurt/offender to the Lord's control. Later, our emotions will begin to be healed and loving feelings will eventually follow. Also, the *willingness* to forgive is not an option for a Christian (see above passages). Even the smallest emotional hurt must be presented to the Father in childlike faith. Otherwise, the wound will fester and begin to poison all our other relationships (See Hebrews 12: 14-15).

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify the emotional "trespasses" (Luke. 11: 2-4 KJV) you have experienced from others. Look especially at close relationships: Family members, friends, parents, church members, pastor... Don't be overwhelmed if you find the Lord has given you a lengthy list. Ask for His gift of wisdom on where to begin. Remember, this is a process. Take it one step at a time. In your daily quiet time with the Lord, begin to pray through your forgiveness. Let the Lord help you in this by sharing this challenge of spiritual growth with others who will prayerfully support you. You do not need to share details (even the name of the offender) but simply enough that will permit others to lift you up to the Lord. This will avoid the gossip mentioned in James chapter 3. You are not looking to be "right" *but to be **reconciled***. The Lord will take care of any moral justification or proof, if it is necessary (Deut. 32: 35; Matt. 7: 1). You are to yield your "avenging rights" to His Powerful Righteousness. Again, this is an adventure in dynamic submission to God's power. Trust Him to be in charge.

(over)

The 3 R's of Forgiveness

1. **Realize** the hurt.

- * Prayerfully ask Jesus to *clarify* the emotional hurt and your feelings (Jn. 14: 26-27).
- * Don't dismiss the hurt or let the offender off the hook. Hold them accountable for their wrong choice(s) in a healthy, honest way (Eph. 4: 15).
- * Don't be afraid to face the hurt in His Love (1Jn. 4: 18). He may even show you some connections to other hurts in other situations buried in your memory. He wants to heal those too! But He will never give you more than you can handle (1 Cor. 10: 13; "Tempt" also means "test").
- * Sometimes it is helpful to list in writing not only the various offenses received but also the *feelings* connected with them.

2. **Release** the control.

- * Consciously let go of your desire to control the situation into Jesus' hands. Practice stepping down from the Judge's Bench and inviting Jesus to take charge.
- * Release your own feelings of hurt and rejection and anger into the Lord's hands, trusting He will transform your perspective (Rom. 12:2).
- * Ask Jesus to forgive you of any unhealthy response which has fallen short of God's perfect love (e.g. judgment, bitterness, lack of love...)
- * As you approach the Lord with open hands, **be prepared to receive** His power of forgiveness and healing and direction for the next steps.

3. **Redeem** the person.

- * **Forgive** (not excuse) the person by releasing the shed blood of Jesus over them. *Self-forgiveness* works the same way. True reconciliation costs God dearly (i.e. the Cross).
- * Begin to regularly pray for the person that God's presence may fill and renew them. (Be careful here about being too directive or specific, as we still fall into wanting to control out of our hurt). See that person (or yourself) more through God's eyes (Psalm 139: 1-14; 2 Cor. 5: 14-20)
- * Using Matt. 18: 15-17 as a guide, ask the Lord how you might share your hurt and healing with the offending person. Consider meeting together but a letter or phone call may also be appropriate. Don't approach them to force an apology but simply to help them also experience the Lord's reconciling power. Remember, you are only to share your feelings honestly and lovingly. Watch your motives (No finger pointing allowed). Trust God to work His results out. Trust Him to speak through you. Trust Him. (Isaiah 55: 8-11).

Other Scripture meditations regarding forgiveness: Gen. 50: 19-21; Ps 131 and 133; Matt. 18: 21-35; Luke 15 (entire chapter); Jn. 13: 34-35; Acts 7:60; Eph. 1: 7, 4, 32; Col. 3: 12-17.