

# **FORGIVE**

- ♥ to give up resentment
- ♥ to give up the desire to punish
- ♥ to pardon
- ♥ to cancel a debt

The goal → To let go of a hurt and move ahead with life.

True forgiveness is NOT:

**Forgetting** – If the hurt wounded you enough to require forgiveness, you may always have a memory of it.

**Excusing or condoning** – The wrong should not be denied, minimized, or justified.

**Weakness** – You do not become a doormat or oblivious to cruelty.

Indicators of your need to forgive someone are **ANGER** or a desire for **REVENGE**. Neither of these is sin! Both of these are God-given responses to disrespect.

The best illustration I can think of as an example of how to respond to disrespect is:

After receiving our disrespect, God did not chose to immediately kill us,

*“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* – Romans 5:8

Instead, God, the innocent party, took the first step to forgive us!

There are few acts as loving as freeing someone from their past. I tried thinking of a great illustration of this principle and then realized that Christians are a great illustration of this truth. Has there been anything more freeing in your life than when Christ forgave you?

# **HOW TO FORGIVE**

A man, his heart heavy with grief, was walking in the woods. As he thought about his life, he knew many things were not right.

He thought about those who had lied about him back when he had a job.

His thoughts turned to those who had stolen his things and cheated him.

He remembered family that had passed on. His mind turned to the illness he had that no one could cure.

His very soul was filled with anger, resentment and frustration.

Standing there this day, searching for answers he could not find, knowing all else had failed him, he knelt at the base of an old oak tree to seek the One he knew would always be there. And with tears in his eyes, he prayed:

“Lord, You have done wonderful things for me in this life. You have told me to do many things for You, and I happily obeyed.

Today, You have told me to forgive. I am sad, Lord, because I cannot. I don't know how. It is not fair.

Lord, I didn't deserve these wrongs that were done against me and I shouldn't have to forgive. As perfect as Your way is Lord, this one thing I cannot do, for I don't know how to forgive.

My anger is so deep Lord, I fear I may not hear You, but I pray that You teach me to do this one thing I cannot do - “Teach me To forgive.”

As he knelt there in the quiet shade of that old oak tree, he felt the presence of another. He raised his head and saw two feet held to the wood with a large spike through them.

He raised his head more, and tears came to his eyes as he saw Jesus hanging on a cross. He saw spikes in His hands, a gash in His side, a torn and battered body, deep thorns sunk into His head. Finally he saw the suffering and pain on His precious face. As their eyes met, the man's tears turned to sobbing, and Jesus began to speak.

“Have you ever told a lie?” He asked? The man answered - “Yes, Lord.”

“Have you ever been given too much change and kept it?” The man answered, “Yes, Lord.” And the man sobbed more and more.

“Have you ever taken something from work that wasn't yours?” Jesus asked. And the man answered, “Yes, Lord.”

“Have you ever sworn, using My name in vain?” The man, crying now, answered, “Yes, Lord.”

Jesus asked many more times, “Have you ever...?” The man's crying became uncontrollable, for he could only answer, “Yes, Lord.”

Through tears, his eyes met those of Jesus, and here was a look of love the man had never seen or known before.

Jesus said, “I didn't deserve this either, but I forgive you.”

(See Hebrews 12:2-3; Ephesians 4:32))

Forgiving is a divine act, and it's only with God's help that we can rise above our humanity, forego revenge, and forgive others. Do you wish to be Christlike? The very act of forgiving makes you more like Christ.

Initially, you may not feel like forgiving. Ask God to help you feel like forgiving. He longs to help you and He can do it – He has forgiven much more.

The Bible places a HUGE importance on our willingness to forgive. Jesus said,

***“For 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)

Now, to finish the job, to make forgiveness complete:

***“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”***  
(Matthew 5:43-44)

**Pray for the one you're forgiving!  
Ask God to bless him/her!**

**And do it every day until it's part of you!**  
(The forgiveness just won't be complete until you do this!)

**Remember: Withholding forgiveness is giving others power over you. Withholding forgiveness and nursing resentment simply allows another person to have control over your well-being.**

The biggest obstacle between you and forgiveness is PRIDE. Clinging to pride sets you up to be opposed by God!

***“God opposes the proud,  
but gives grace to the humble.”***

Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5

It is God's grace (His undeserved blessing) that we need the most! We can be humble and be given grace, OR we can practice pride and set ourselves up against God!

Personally, I need all the help I can get. I don't need opposition - especially from God!

Lastly, bury the grudge - literally. Write a letter to the person who hurt you. Express fully, clearly, honestly how you feel and why that person's act hurt you and made you angry. Conclude with the bold declaration that you have forgiven him or her. If you have a trusted friend or counselor, share the letter with him/her. Then, bury the letter in a potted plant or somewhere in your yard.

# **VICTORY through FORGIVENESS**



*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."*  
(Matthew 18:21-22)

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