

4. Begin the process of forgetting the offense by asking God to remind you each time you indulge in thoughts about your wounding. When you realize that you are thinking about this again, invite the Lord into the middle of it and surrender these thoughts to Him.

Don't stuff the thoughts and feelings down into you. Lift them up to God. Ask Him to take these thoughts. It may require time but the more you do this, the less you will remember.

5. Pray for those who have offended you and do good to them. Yes, do good to them! Ask God to show you practical ways for you to bless them with good things, help, money, etc. This is one of the best weapons in the whole arsenal to help facilitate your healing and freedom (Matt. 5:44).

6. Ask God to give you new eyes and a new heart toward this person. Do not freeze them in time. God is at work in their life too.

Please remember; this is a process and it will take time. But the end result will be peace within and a deeper relationship with God. Dear friend, God loves you so much. He will help you.

Asking For Forgiveness

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

What if YOU are the one who has done the wounding? You must humble yourself, beloved, go to the person you have offended, and say six simple words: "Please forgive me for hurting you." It does not matter if you were right or wrong. If you were wrong, admit it. "I was wrong; please forgive me." If you don't have the courage to speak with them face to face, then at least write them a note. You are not too proud to do this, are you? It is apparent from this scripture that the Lord is not interested in receiving your offering until after you seek reconciliation. This should be a very sobering thought: your songs, your prayers, and your money are unacceptable to God.

The Wrong Way to Do Things

Some "offenders" say nothing and just go about their business thinking that time will heal. Others believe that if they are nice to the person, or tell a joke, that it is the same as asking for forgiveness. Not so. This relieves the tension and permits the relationship to continue; nevertheless, the offense remains and will flare up again. In Jesus' name, humble yourself, go to the person you have wounded and say, "Please forgive me for hurting you." This is well pleasing to our loving and forgiving God. (Note: Don't say, "**If** I have hurt you" as this dilutes the apology. Freely acknowledge that you *have* hurt them.)

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The Downward Spiral of Unforgiveness

"If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:15

Unforgiveness is a very serious matter, dear believer, and perhaps secondary in importance only to the doctrine of Salvation. There is no option; all Christians must forgive. In fact, the servant of Jesus must become an expert at forgiving. If you wield the axe of forgiveness effectively, bitterness will be destroyed at the root. If not, misery will follow.

Some offenses are major: the results of violence, rape or murder, or perhaps some great loss. Others are less grievous such as being slighted, or embarrassed by another, unmet expectations, etc. In serious cases of unforgiveness, there is usually a progressive downward spiral: You may toss and turn in bed thinking about it. At first, you begin to experience self-pity, followed by critical and judgmental thoughts. Anger and frustration begin to increase tempting even mature Christians

to gossip about the offender. At this point, neutral statements made by the offender may be perceived as attacks and your offense increases. If the offense took place in church, you begin to withdraw from church activities. Eventually you leave and begin to talk about the pastor, people, or policies of the place that you once loved.

Regardless of the cause, bitterness, resentment and even hatred can build, making you an open door for demonic activity (the tormentors that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 18). Do you realize that many addictions have their root in unforgiveness?

All of this has drawn you away from God and perhaps; your very soul is now at stake. Unforgiveness is an extremely serious matter. What will you do about it?

The Truth About Forgiveness

Perhaps the next statement will be a revelation to you; it is to many: Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is an act of your will. So often, after being hurt, you may become angry, upset, out of sorts. You could easily equate these feelings with your ability to forgive. But forgiveness is an act of obedience to God. It is not dependent on how you feel. It is a decision that anyone can make, even when angry. Yes, a difficult choice for some, but a choice nonetheless; and this decision makes the difference between your sins being forgiven or not. That is certainly worth considering. *"If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matt. 6:15).

This is stated with the utmost love and compassion toward those who have been wounded. God loves you so much. He was probably weeping when you were being violated. He did not want this for you. But, you must go on from here, for your sake, and for the sake of those who love you. God speaks so strongly about unforgiveness because He knows the consequences all too well. Every day He sees hearts fill with bitterness, hatred and revenge. Destruction usually follows.

God loves you; He does not want you to spend your life filled with internal strife. Some think that they will forget, in time, and be healed. But this belies the facts. Unforgiveness remains deep within and may cause emotional and/or physical illness. It has been proven that strong unresolved emotional feelings can cause a malfunction of the self-immune system, digestive problems, bowel problems, bone and joint problems, and even cancer. You can make the right choice today. With God's grace available to you at this moment, you can choose to forgive. Please do it now.

Lord, I want to obey You. Please help me. By Your grace, I choose to forgive _____ and _____ and... Please work deep within, causing me to forgive from my heart. Heal me completely. I ask this in the name of Jesus, the One Who has forgiven me. Amen!

The Steps to Freedom

It is now time to walk through the entire process of forgiveness; ask for the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and give you help and encouragement. This is very important:

These steps should be followed whether the offender asks for your forgiveness or not. In less serious cases, when possible, it is good to go to the one who has hurt you with a humble posture and seek reconciliation. Some offenses can easily be resolved with a simple conversation, without involving others. Of course, humility by both parties would make it so much easier, but even if you alone humble yourself and seek reconciliation, God will be pleased.

When it is impossible or unwise to approach the offender, the following steps should be taken:

1. Make the choice to forgive. Get alone with God, ask for His help, and declare out loud, "I choose to forgive ____ for doing or saying ____ to me." Do this with each name that comes to mind. (Perhaps you have already completed this step. It certainly doesn't hurt to do it again. There may be additional names revealed.)

2. This next step may give you a bit of a pride attack, but it is vital. Be sure to do it: Ask God to forgive you for the critical and judgmental thoughts and words, and perhaps actions, which you have had toward the one who has hurt you. Gossip and criticism is never justified. Although God understands your woundedness, He cannot excuse your sin; He will however, lovingly forgive.

3. Release these people before God. In other words, don't hold them in bondage as though they have a debt to pay you. Don't say, "I'll forgive them but they owe me." God forgives us completely. He expects us to do the same.

