



Forgiveness is ... a decision I make to obey God in getting my heart right with Him.

A decision. God has given us the choice to decide, even if our emotions are resisting. It is an act of our will, not our emotions. Our emotions and healing come later as we allow God to heal our hearts.

A decision I make. I am the only one who can decide to forgive or else live with the crippling consequences of unforgiveness.

To obey God. Forgiveness is not a suggestion. It is commanded by God.

Getting my heart right with Him. It is between God and me, not another person and me.

Forgiveness is...

- ☑ A decision I make to obey God in getting my heart right with Him.
 - ☑ A command, a choice, an act of the will and we are able to forgive.
 - ☑ Separating the person from their sins. We must separate the person from what they have done.
 - ☑ Being aware of what someone has done and still forgiving them.
 - ☑ A key to moving mountains.
 - ☑ Who God is and He wants us to be like our Father.
 - ☑ The mark of **radical love** exercised to the degree you have been forgiven. God wants us to forgive from the heart (Mat. 18:35) and that takes God's grace. We can't always start by forgiving from our heart, but we can begin by making the decision to forgive. Then we can enter into the healing process that, if we persevere, can bring us to the place of wholehearted forgiveness.
 - ☑ The **degree to which you want to be forgiven and will be forgiven.**
 - ☑ Having the **mind of Christ. A condition for worship.**
 - ☑ Not a one-time act, but a **lifestyle** of staying right with God that has to be maintained.
 - ☑ **Glorifying to God.**
 - ☑ **Choosing to keep no record of wrong.**
 - ☑ **Freedom.** Who knows how **God will use you** down the road if, once and for all, you set your enemies free and never look back.
 - ☑ **Peace.** God is a jealous God and won't let us enjoy inner peace if we have an unforgiving spirit.
 - ☑ **Not being judged and condemned by God.**
 - ☑ **Mercy and produces mercy and blessings.**
 - ☑ **Refusing to punish.** Vindication is God's prerogative and God's prerogative alone. If we maneuver our way into the process, God may let us do what we will; then neither divine vengeance nor true justice will be carried out – only the fulfillment of our personal grudge. We must ask, *"How much of what I am about to say or do is just an attempt to punish?"* If punishment is our motive, we are about to grieve the Holy Spirit.
 - ☑ **Graciousness in not telling what they did.** When I blurt out what someone else has done to me, I am apparently forgetting that God will not tell what I did to Him. When I tell on Satan I am showing contempt for my own forgiveness. Graciousness is withholding certain facts you know to be true, so as to leave your enemy's reputation unscathed.
 - ☑ **The way to break the powerful spiritual bond that locks people into a negative way of relating to each other.** The person who has been forgiven may begin to act differently, even when he does not know that forgiveness has taken place.
- (Num. 14:19; Deut. 32:35; Psa. 86:5; Proverbs 11:17; 24:17-18; Isaiah 58; Matt. 5:7, 23-24, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:15-17; 18:21-35; Mark 11:23-26; Luke 6:36-37; 17:3-4; 23:34; Rom. 2:1; 5:1-2; 8:29; 12:17-21, 19; I Cor. 13:2-5; II Cor. 5:18-21; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 4:5; Col. 3:12-13; Heb. 10:30; 12:15; I Peter 2:23; 3:9, 15-16; 4:8; II Peter 1:3-4)

*The greatest positive consequence of walking in total forgiveness
is the knowledge that you have pleased God!!!*

Forgiveness is not...

- **A feeling.** We do not feel like forgiving when we are hurt by someone.
- **Approval of what they did.**
- **Excusing what they did.** We do not cover for the sins of other people. We do not point to circumstances in an attempt to explain away their behavior.
- **Justifying what they did.** To justify means to "make right or just." Evil cannot be justified. God will never call something that is evil "right," and He does not require us to do so.
- **Pardoning what they did.** A pardon is a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of their action, such as a penalty or a sentence.
- **Reconciliation.** Reconciliation requires the participation of 2 people. There must be total willingness on both parts. You can forgive without reconciliation.
- **Denying what they did or blindness to it.** Denying that an offense took place, or repression (suppressing what we really feel inside), is almost always unconscious. Blindness is a conscious choice to pretend that a sin did not take place. Forgiveness can only be offered after we have come to terms with reality.
- **Forgetting.** Although we may not be able to forget, we can still choose not to remember. But even if we cannot totally forget, we must not dwell on the wrong or person. By so doing, we are partnering with Satan.
- **Refusing to take the wrong seriously.** We cannot truly forgive until we see clearly the offense we are forgiving and understand its seriousness.
- **Healing.** Once the offender is released, all the pain does not automatically leave one's heart. After the decision, the need is for God to come and heal the heart and take away the pain.
- **Only a decision.** It is more than the simple act of deciding. In most situations, (and this is certainly true for the more seriously wounded person) **forgiveness is a process** that takes time.

Consequences of the sin of unforgiveness. Unforgiveness...

- Is as bad as the wrong action of the offender. It shows an **indifference to the greatest thing God did – forgive our sins by His death on the cross.**
- Causes your **prayers not to be heard.**
- Will bring your **spiritual life to a halt.**
- Is a **broken relationship with God.**
- Harms other relationships.
- Grieves the Holy Spirit.
- Produces judgment from God and others.
- Brings God's justice onto us. God will not forgive your sins.
- Produces a lack of peace and brings torment.
- May cause physical ailments.
- Gives Satan access to your life. The devil will give you good reasons to not forgive and convince you it is God's will.

(Isa. 58; 57:15; 59:2; Psa. 66:18; 103:3; 38:3-4; Prov. 17:22; 14:30; Matt. 5:21-24; 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37; Acts 8:23; Rom. 12:18; II Cor. 2:10-11; Gal. 6:7-8; Eph. 4:26-27,30-32; Heb. 12:15; James 4:1-4; 17; 5:16; I John 2:9-11; 4:18)

Steps to totally forgiving others:

1. **Allow God** to heal the deep wounds from the violation or offense.
2. **Ask God** to help you establish safe boundaries (if needed).
3. Make the deliberate and irrevocable choice **not to tell anyone what they did.**
4. **Be pleasant to them should you be around them.** God asks us not only to forgive, but to be willing to take the initiative for reconciliation when needed. (Mat. 5:23-24; 11:25-26)
5. **If conversation ensues, say that which would set them free from guilt.**
6. **Let them feel good about themselves.**
 - Do not remind them of their wrong and your hurt, and it also means helping them through any guilt they may have. This can be done without any reference to what they did.
 - You therefore must behave as though you don't even think they did anything wrong. Give them dignity.
7. **Keep it up today, tomorrow, this year and for life.**
 - Lifelong commitment
 - There will come a time when you think you are completely over it and have won a total victory – only to find the very next day Satan reminds you of what they did and the utter injustice that they will be unpunished and never exposed.
 - Most commitments to forgive need renewal.

8. Pray for them!

- It is a command. Mat. 5:44-45 *"But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."* NIV
- It is praying that God will forgive them – that is, overlook what they have done and bless and prosper them as though they'd never sinned at all.
- Why is it so hard to pray for the one who has hurt you?
You take a route utterly against the flesh. Nobody will ever know you are doing it. It could be difficult when God answers that prayer and truly blesses them as if they'd never sinned.

How would you like a person to pray for you who perceives you as an enemy?

Luke 6:31 *"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*

Forgiving God

- Our bitterness is often aimed at God because deep in our hearts we believe that HE is the one who allowed bad things to happen in our lives. Since He is all-powerful and all-knowing, He could have prevented tragedies and offenses from happening. It seems that He has allowed us to suffer when we didn't do anything. What we ultimately believe is that God is to blame for our hurt. It is the question that many have asked "Why does God allow evil and suffering to continue when He has the power to stop it?"
- Romans 8:28 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* NIV
- God does turn evil into blessing. God did not send His Son into the world to explain evil, but rather to save us from it and to exemplify a life of suffering. If we wait patiently for God's purposes to be fulfilled – we will say that He has done all things well, even in what He permitted.
- In order to have the peace that passes understanding, you have to give up your right to understand.

Forgiving ourselves

There is no lasting joy in forgiveness if it doesn't include forgiving yourself. Not forgiving yourself is as wrong as not forgiving others, because God loves us just as much as He loves others. He will be just as unhappy when we don't forgive ourselves as when we hold a grudge against others.

Why can't we forgive ourselves?

- **Anger.** We may be angry with ourselves. Not forgiving ourselves is self-hatred and anger with ourselves.
- **Fear.** Regret over the past leads to guilt, and guilt can lead to the fear of missing "what might have been" or fear that what has happened cannot possibly turn out for good. Recognize that fear and punishing ourselves for our mistakes displeases God.
- **Pride, self-righteousness and self-pity.** Fear and pride are like identical twins just like self-righteousness and self-pity. We feel sorry for ourselves and show it by not forgiving ourselves.

Recognize who the real enemy is --- Satan!

Prayer to Forgive:

"Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, I forgive _____ not only with my emotions but with my will, in obedience to your Word. I forgive _____ for _____. (You say each specific thing the Holy Spirit brings to mind). There is nothing he/she can do to repay the debt. I cancel the debt and accept the loss; he/she does not owe me anything, not even an apology. I bless _____ in Jesus' Name. Heavenly Father, I believe You will restore everything that I have lost because of these things."

For Bitterness Toward God:

"Father, forgive me for being angry with You. I choose to surrender all resentment, bitterness and judgment against You. Renew my mind to see You as loving, good and desiring my best at all times. Thank you!"

Great Resources for helping to forgive are:

"Grace and Forgiveness" by John and Carol Arnott & *"Total Forgiveness"* by R. T. Kendall (1-16-13)