



# THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

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## NORTHSTAR INSPIRATION

*Emotional  
Health Insights  
from a Christian  
Perspective*



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## WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Forgiveness is a wonderful concept. If I owe a man \$10 and he forgives me the debt, I no longer owe him any money. In true and complete forgiveness, I now have a restored relationship with him. It is not that he chooses to give me more time to pay, or that he chooses not to collect the debt, but that he forgives the debt. It is as if I never owed him money.

I need forgiveness and I need to extend it to others. It is the single most curative healing agent in any relationship. When you choose to not forgive someone, you are choosing to hold on to your resentment and allowing bitterness a foothold in your life.

## THE NEED TO FORGIVE OTHERS

Because we were all born to imperfect parents and have made mistakes ourselves, we all need forgiveness. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Many of those around us, even those with close relationship, have offended and hurt us. Our relationships are damaged by this breach of trust and need healing and restoration.

## THE OFFER TO US

We have failed God’s expectation of us. Yet He has

made a way to restore the relationship through confession and forgiveness. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

It would be nice to think pain and guilt drive us toward God and working things out in our relationships, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, out of our own embarrassment and shame, we would rather hide than seek God’s redemptive solution. People often avoid others and God because they harbor deep bitterness.

## **THE CLEAN HEART**

Repent of your wrongdoing and admit your faults quickly. The beauty of confession comes through the cleansing of the heart that follows. “If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14) “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our

sins.” (Colossians 2:13) Accept Christ’s forgiveness. It is not dependent on you, your good works, or feelings, but is completely dependent on God. To reject His gift of forgiveness is to reject God the Giver. Repent and ask God to cleanse your heart.

## **FORGIVING OTHERS**

We can forgive those who hurt us because God has forgiven us for our mistakes. He is a God of mercy and compassion, and we should demonstrate mercy toward others. “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mark 11:25)

## **REFUSING TO FORGIVE**

People use many reasons to not forgive others. Fear, bitterness, and a hope for revenge all play a part in this self-centered drama. Refusing to forgive will bring many painful consequences, including depression, burnout, physical problems, and broken relationships. The wish to hurt others because they hurt you is inspired by hopelessness. Proverbs



warns against this saying, “Do not say, ‘I’ll do to him what he has done to me; I’ll pay that man back for what he did.’” (Proverbs 24:29)

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE FORGIVE?

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person’s sin or mistake. Forgiveness is costly. Sometimes it doesn’t bring the emotional relief you hoped for because it cannot and does not restore what you lost. If your neighbor accidentally kills your cat while backing out of his driveway and you forgive

him, your cat has not regained life. Forgiveness loosens the chains that hold you captive and allows you to go forward again!

## WHAT DOESN’T HAPPEN

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Those who try to forget find they cannot. God says that He will remember our sins no more (Hebrews 10:17), but He is omniscient—He cannot forget. Psalm 103:12 says He will never use the past against us. When we bring up the past against others, we likely have not truly forgiven them. (Anderson, 2017)

## STEPS TO FORGIVING OTHERS

1. **Confess your sins to God.** Start this process knowing you have been forgiven by God, and He has promised to forgive your every sin. Repent and change your behavior, thoughts, and attitudes.
2. **Search yourself.** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the hidden messages behind the incident that offended you. You may have been hit by your father as a child. Perhaps the message you received was that you have little value or love needs to be earned. When you forgive, be complete, forgiving not only the actions, but also the hurtful messages behind the injury.
3. **Acknowledge your part.** We have contributed to some painful events in our own lives more than we want to believe. It is good, helpful, healing, and wise to admit what we have done.
4. **Release the other person from the debt they owe you.** If someone owed you \$500 and you forgave the debt, you would not go to the mailbox each day looking for payment. Likewise, after you forgive, do not expect those who have offended you to make restitution.
5. **Pray for those who have hurt you.** Ask God to bless those who have hurt you. Hope the best for them. This one simple concept has brought release from a growing bitterness for many who have employed it! Praise and thank God for this person.
6. **Resist the attack of the enemy.** Remember, this is one area where Satan seeks a foothold into our lives. After you forgive, Satan is quick to whisper that it didn’t happen, doesn’t count, others don’t deserve it, and a host of other lies.
7. **Bless the person when you can!** Although this is not always possible, it can be an outward demonstration of your changed and clean heart! (Anderson, 2017)

## IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Forgiveness is a choice of the will. Make the decision now to forgive others! If you don't let them off the hook, you are still hooked too! You might say, "You don't understand how much they hurt me!" But with that attitude, they are still

hurting you. You don't forgive someone for their sake, you forgive someone for your sake, so you can be free. (Anderson, 2017)

### SOURCE

Anderson, N.T. (2017). *Steps to Freedom in Christ*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

## STUMBLING BLOCKS TO FORGIVING OTHERS

These false beliefs hinder us and make forgiving others a difficult task:

1. Forgiving would lead you to believe what you did was all right!
2. If I forgive, you'll do it again.
3. I can't forgive you until you hurt as much as I've been hurt.
4. I can't.
5. You didn't apologize, so I can't forgive you!
6. You didn't admit you were wrong!
7. It would just cause another argument!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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