

## Practical side of forgiveness

**Why should we forgive?** We all know the answer, because God forgives us. We know God commands us to forgive but at times this is hard to do.

We all can recall a truly hurtful act that another person carried out against us. Can we really be expected to forgive those who have offended or lied, or even hurt us or our loved ones? The answer is yes, with the help of our Heavenly Father.

### What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is about extending mercy to those who have wronged us, victimized or even harmed us, even if they don't acknowledge what their wrongdoing was or say they are sorry, we need to forgive without demanding recompense. Forgiveness also helps us as it can bring us peace, happiness, and improve our emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing and help us to heal. When we hold on to hurt, we are emotionally and cognitively hobbled, and our relationships suffer, and we become prisoners of our feelings and emotions.



Forgiveness is being aware of what someone did to you, **and still forgiving them**, and letting go of the hurt and leaving it to God to handle the situation, it is the absence of bitterness and the giving of peace, by being merciful and gracious, and following God's commandment to forgive others.

**Forgiveness is not approving, excusing, justifying, pardoning, or condoning behaviour**, it is not blindness to what they did or you refusing to take what they did as serious, it also isn't pretending it didn't hurt us. Forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation or tolerating further abuse or the lack of respect.

**To find peace, we must learn to allow God to work in our lives.** He can shape our lives and give us the confidence to face the future. God puts us in situations for a reason, to learn and practice forgiveness to others, to see how we handle it and respond, we need to remember that God has a purpose for allowing things to happen, and we may never understand His wisdom, but we simply must trust His will (Psalm 37:5). Remember, God doesn't tempt us above what we are able to bear, (1 Corinthians 10:13) and He can fix it on the day of our first prayer but often doesn't, as he

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wants us to learn and grow from the lesson. We are also told that those that persevere under trial and stand the test will receive the crown of life that our Lord has promised to those who love and obey Him (James 1:12). For those who hurt us, forgiveness doesn't excuse them, nor does it make light of the pain they cause you, and it doesn't mean they are freed from the consequences of the sin, but we must let go and trust God with the situation. (Romans 12:1)

**The power of forgiveness is that it frees us and heals us while giving us inner peace and happiness,** it restores broken relationships, helps our physical and mental health, and when we forgive, God forgives us. Forgiveness can also help to lower blood pressure, and improve our immune system, as well as it reduces our anxiety, stress, hostility, and depression, it also improves our self-esteem. It doesn't mean that when you forgive all our feelings and emotions attached to the situation will automatically disappear, as the process of forgiveness can take time, but it can free us from the bitterness and anger, as if we don't forgive it can leave lasting feelings of resentment, bitterness, anger, and sometimes even hatred and revenge. When we don't forgive, we are unable to let go and move on in our lives, as it results in us not enjoying the present, as this can weigh us down, and blur our vision.

**Forgiveness can also teach us how to treat others, due to us experiencing the hurt that someone has caused us,** as it can foster empathy and compassion within us. Going through this trial can give us firsthand experience of pain and suffering, making us more sensitive to the struggles of others. This newfound empathy allows us to connect with others on a more emotional level and offer genuine support. It can also teach us how to treat, think, feel, and speak towards others, due to the pain and hurt we have experienced from others doing it to us. We need our experiences and the lessons we learn to improve us, so that we can help, encourage, strengthen, and be there for our family and our brethren and sisters.

### **Why do we need to forgive?**

We are commanded by God to forgive, because **He forgives us.** (Colossians 3:13). It is a sin not to forgive and the result can be death (Rom 6:23), it also can affect our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2), and with others (Matthew 5:23-24). During the journey of forgiveness, we will become increasingly aware of the grace of the **Father** and the overwhelming forgiveness shown to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blaming others and holding onto grudges will only increase the pain, and worst of all, it will keep projecting onto others, and the more we allow their actions to cost your peace of mind the harder it will be to forgive them. **We can't start to recover and mend until we forgive,** as forgiveness sets us free. The more our pain consumes us the more it will control us. We are not designed to hold onto the bitterness and resentment that comes with past hurts, forgiveness and moving on gives the freedom to be a better person. If we don't forgive, the chaos of our emotions will continue, and we will never stop replaying the situation repeatedly in our head. We cannot change how others treat us, but we can change how we react and act towards them.

We are given lessons in life so we can practise forgiveness and letting go, so we can grow and learn from the valuable lesson. We can improve from the situation and put the lessons we have learnt into practice so that we handle and react more Christ like or avoid similar situations in the future. We need to make peace with our past, so it won't disturb our present and future, so we don't become a prisoner of our emotions. We need to try to have eyes that see the best, a heart

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that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith (Ephesians 1:17-19, Matthew 13:16-7).

We need to make sure our past makes us better, not bitter, and remember when we forgive, we heal, and when we let go, we grow.

### **Why is forgiveness so difficult?**

**When a grievous hurt is done towards us, our inner world is badly disrupted, it's difficult to concentrate on anything other than our turmoil or pain.** Forgiveness also can be difficult when the person who hurts us doesn't admit wrongdoing. It may seem unfair as we didn't do anything wrong, or we are confused at why they did this to us, but only God knows the whole story, so we need to forgive and leave it to God to work it out for us.

Unfortunately, the closer the person, like family, or friends or someone we trust, the more severe the offence and deeper the hurt, which results in being more difficult to forgive. As you expect more from them, after all you have given more of yourself to them. As these people are supposed to accept us, love us unconditionally, support us no matter what, and understand us and always be there for us and have our back. When one of these people hurts us, we can lose respect for them, and lose our sense of self-worth. The reason people close to us can hurt us more is we feel it as a betrayal of trust and that can shake our entire world. The hurt that someone that we love has caused us, if someone else that we don't care as much for or a stranger were to do the same thing, we would not feel the same hurt, and we would find it easier to forgive, as it is those that you care for are the ones that can hurt you the most.

**We need to learn how to let go of that throbbing heartbreak of hurt, bitterness, anger, and anxiety,** as well as all the unwanted questions and lack of trust in our relationships, even when others refuse to change and never say they're sorry, because if we don't let go it will hijack our emotions. As we learn to forgive, what seemed impossible, not only becomes possible, but can even become easily achievable and will make you a better person.

**We must empty our hearts of bitterness, wrath, anger,** clamour, slander, and all forms of malice so that we can properly reflect with our words and actions the beautiful traits of kindness, tenderness and forgiveness (Ephesians 3:14-19)

### **Forgiving and forgetting**

**We often hear the phrase, you need to forgive and forget, but at times the forgetting is impossible to do.** While we may be able to forget small wrongdoings of others, we often will remember life-altering hurts and wounds that have made an impact upon us. This phrase, forgiving and forgetting is not found in the bible. Thankfully this is not what Jesus is saying, because it can be impossible to force ourselves to forget something. However, God does instruct us to let go and leave it in God's hand, so we can move forward without the weight of our negative emotions. In Philippians 3:13-14, the word forgetting, means no longer caring for, neglecting, refusing to focus on. Paul is not advising a memory wipe; he is telling us to focus on the present and the future, rather than the past, and in Matthew 18:26 Jesus teaches forgiveness with a parable, of a master which was moved with compassion for his servant, and he forgave him of his debt and let him go.

**We need to forgive each other, just as God forgives us (Ephesians 4:32),** and move on with our life and should strive towards what is ahead for us (Philippians 3:13). We must not allow a root of

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bitterness to spring up in our hearts (Hebrews 12:15). Forgiving is not forgetting, it's letting go and remembering without bitterness, anger, and resentment.

**We need to forgive and let go, so that we aren't held hostage by the other person that has wronged us and let our heart mend.** We don't need or benefit from the other person saying they are sorry or apologizing for what they've done. God sees our hurt, confusion, and our desperate need of help, and we need to trust God's judgement to handle the situation. We need to forgive and let go of our hurt, anger and bitterness, to be able to live in peace and to leave it unto God's wrath, for God says, avenge not yourselves, for it is written, vengeance is Mine, I will repay it (Romans 12:19).

**The bigger the situation and hurt, the bigger the life lesson, which means more growth.** We all go through trials and tribulations, they are given to us to learn humility, grace, acceptance, and patience, and you can come back from them wiser and stronger than before. As you overcome difficult obstacles, you will become stronger and more compassionate. We grow in the rough times, more than in the easy times.

## STEPS FOR FORGIVING

**Choose to forgive and let go** – when we choose to forgive, we can let go, by leaving it in God's hands. This lets you heal and have peace rather than being consumed with the emotional feeling that can weigh us down. **We cannot change what we have experienced, but we can choose how the experience affects our actions and feelings.** This could also involve writing a letter or email to the person that has wronged us, BUT not sending it, this allows you to put it down on paper to help with this process and release any negative feeling or thoughts you may have.

**Ask God to help** – Due to our human nature finding forgiveness at times can be nearly impossible, we need to ask our Heavenly Father to help us to have a forgiving heart and let go of our pain, anger, and resentment. **God is waiting for us to pray and listens to our words and heart.** We need to give our burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of them (Psalm 55:22). Forgiveness is a process that takes time, patience, and faith. We can ask God to help us with forgiving them, just as God forgives us.

**We need to pray for them** – we are told we need to pray for those who have wronged us. When we pray for others, it helps us pave the way for true freedom and forgiveness, it also can help with our emotional, physical, spiritual wellbeing, as it releases us from the captivity of our own misery. **We are told to pray for them which despitefully use us,** those who hate and persecute us, and we are also told to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

**Identify and understand the situation** – We need to reflect on the situation and identify the lessons that God is trying to teach us, so that we can understand and learn from it, so that we also don't let the situation be repeated, or that we have the same reaction to it. When the situation has just happened and we have been badly hurt, when the wound is still fresh, sometimes it is impossible to see the lessons but over time we will gain an understanding of what happened, however we may never understand the reason the other person has done what they have done to us.

**Reconciliation** - is encouraged and is a desired outcome when possible (Romans 12:18). There are situations that may be too dangerous emotionally, physically, and spiritually are not possible to

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reconcile the relationship (2 Timothy 3:1-5), but forgiveness is always possible and is what God calls us to do.

**We need to care for others** – We are told to care for one another and love our enemies, this involves forgiveness. When we are caring for others, we are not thinking about our hurt and grievance towards them.

**If needed, put boundaries in place** – We may need to put in boundaries, as this may be needed to help us move on with our life, and it may be so that we can continue to love others and treat them with respect, so that we can have some kind of relationship with them.

**Seek help from others** –sometimes we might not be able to understand what has happened, so it can be helpful to reach out to someone, to help us identify your situation and make suggestions on how to deal with it. **We can talk to someone we trust, either a family member or an elderly brother or sister.** We may also need to speak to a professional counsellor educated on these issues.



## Conclusion

We know forgiveness can be hard, it can be seen as one of the most difficult of God's commands. But He is the Father of compassion and comfort, so He understands our struggles as we navigate forgiveness within the complexities of our relationships. He sees our hurt and is close to the broken hearted, He saves those whose spirits have been crushed (Psalm 31:18-19). We must forgive and let go, so it doesn't fester or spread to others. When we hand our broken heart to God, He renews our strength, and He heals us (Psalm 147:3). God tells us He is always with us, even unto the end (Psalm 48:14). **God also reminds us that He hears our prayers and has seen our tears and assures us He will heal us (Psalm 20:3).** God also reminds us of the pain we feel now, can't compare to the joy that is coming, (Romans 8:18). He also says bless those who persecute you (Romans 12:4), and we also read and sing the Lord's prayer, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us (Matthew 6:9-13).

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