

# Forgiveness

“Forgiving”

Excerpts from Tools for Mentoring by Joy Schroeder

## Forgiving Others

It is guaranteed that, as you go through life, people will hurt and offend you. It is your choice whether you hold it against them, harboring resentment, or forgive them as Christ has forgiven you. When you are hurt, God provides miraculous grace. That grace is an invisible shield that protects you from the full impact of the hurt. The grace gives you the ability to forgive so you are protected from the long-range destruction of holding onto the hurt. "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

Resentment and bitterness block the pipeline through which God's grace comes into your life. Therefore, you are left alone, without God's grace, to bear the full effects of the hurt and the resentment. The resentment will eat away your soul like battery acid. It will punish you long after your offender has forgotten how he/she hurt you. Then, the resentment and bitterness will infect relationships with those you love. "Bitterness will defile many. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:15)

"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord." (Romans 12:19). If you insist on taking your own revenge, or, more subtly, maintaining the sense that the offender owes you something, you are taking a position for personal destruction. You are usurping God's rightful place as judge and penalty-dispenser of all mankind. You have come between God and the offender. He is dispensing judgment, but you are in the line of fire. When you forgive, you leave room for God's wrath. You get out from between God and the offender. Now, God is free to do what is wise and just with the offender.

Forgiveness is costly. It means accepting undeserved suffering. It means absorbing the consequences of another person's evil choices. It means choosing not to take revenge. It is a choice to trust God to deal justly with the offender and to make things right on your behalf. It is vital to keep in mind that justice will take place at some point in your life, either this side of death or the other. Remember, your life is eternal, one long continuum with death as a door separating the part where there is very little justice from the part of life where justice will be fully realized. God can be trusted to make all things right sometime in your eternal lifetime. This life is not all there is.

## How to Forgive

Forgive from the heart. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:35). Forgiveness is difficult. It is not overlooking an offense or pretending it never happened. It is not minimizing its painful affect on your life. It is facing fully what is done. It is telling the truth, and forgiving what truly happened. [It is taking the record of what was done and saying you no longer want to be in charge of carrying its burden or meting out revenge. Instead you are fully acknowledging what happened but choosing to hand the debt slip (what should have been/what is owed to you) to God, making it his role to bring justice and healing.] That is forgiving from the heart, the wounded heart.

## The Forgiveness Checklist

Let's take some time to walk through forgiveness. Who do you need to forgive? A parent? A sibling? A boyfriend/girlfriend? A friend? A boss? God? Yourself?

Directions:

1. Think of the situation or person/s that you need to forgive. Ask the Lord if there is anyone else you need to include in the forgiveness process.
2. Take a sheet of paper and list the specific way each person wronged you. We encourage you to be detailed and specific rather than a vague statement like "He hurt me." This way you know exactly what you are forgiving.
3. Go through you list and forgive each wrong out loud: "Lord, I forgive \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_." Do this through the whole list.
4. Now go back through the list and pray a prayer of blessing on each person. "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." (1 Peter 3:9)

You have listed the wrongs these people did to you. Now, ask God to show you any wrongs that you did to them. Even if you were only 10% at fault, repent of this to God. For example, did you display a bad attitude, were you stubborn, lazy, ungrateful, untruthful, vindictive? In addition, ask God to forgive you for holding unforgiveness and resentment.

When you have finished forgiving and repenting, tear up the forgiveness checklist. This is like tearing up a debt slip. You are saying these people don't owe you anymore. You are turning the offense, the hurt, the grudge, and the offender over to God. You are trusting Him to do what is just on your behalf. You are free from carrying resentment anymore.

Forgiveness lances the wound so that healing can begin. It is time now to receive healing from the love of your heavenly Father. Take some time now to ask the Father to heal your heart. Let Him love you. "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." (Psalms 34:18) "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." (Psalm 147:3)

## Forgiving and Healing as a Process

Life is like an onion. God peels off layer by layer to heal us and sometimes we weep. The process starts with a choice; force yourself to forgive. Say daily, "I forgive you. I bless you. And, Father, I receive your healing."

This choice removes the thorn of resentment, allows the infection to drain out, and keeps the wound in a place of receiving healing from God. This way, His powerful grace is able to have its full effect on your life. Eventually, or right away, God will drop the reality of forgiveness into your heart where you feel like you have forgiven. He will change your feelings so that they follow your right choice to forgive. He will complete the healing of your heart. You obey by forgiving. Let him do the healing.

## How to Treat the Offender

Forgiving means that you are free from resentment, you do not wish the offender ill, that you do not harbor animosity against him/her.

You do not need to tell him/her that you forgive him/her unless God tells you to. Evaluate whether telling him/her would build your relationship.

Forgiving does not mean that you have to let the person into your life if he/she is not trustworthy. Trust may need to be rebuilt. You may need to establish wise and healthy boundaries.

"Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else." (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

Go forth and live free from the shackles of resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness! Make repentance and the process of forgiveness part of your normal rhythm with the Lord.

**Relevant Scriptures:**

Matthew 6:14-15	Don't forgive, the Father will not forgive you.
Matthew 18:21-35	The story of the unforgiving servant
Ephesians 4: 26-27, 31-32	Don't let the sun go down on your anger
Colossians 3:12	"Bear with each other...forgive as the Lord forgave you"
Psalms 103:12	How the Lord has forgiven you

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does viewing forgiveness as a debt slip that you hand over to God make you feel about forgiveness?
2. What was hardest for you in this forgiveness process?
3. If the person you were forgiving is not a trustworthy or safe person, what boundaries are you going to set in your interactions with them?
4. Do you agree that forgiveness is a daily choice? Why?