

Forgiveness



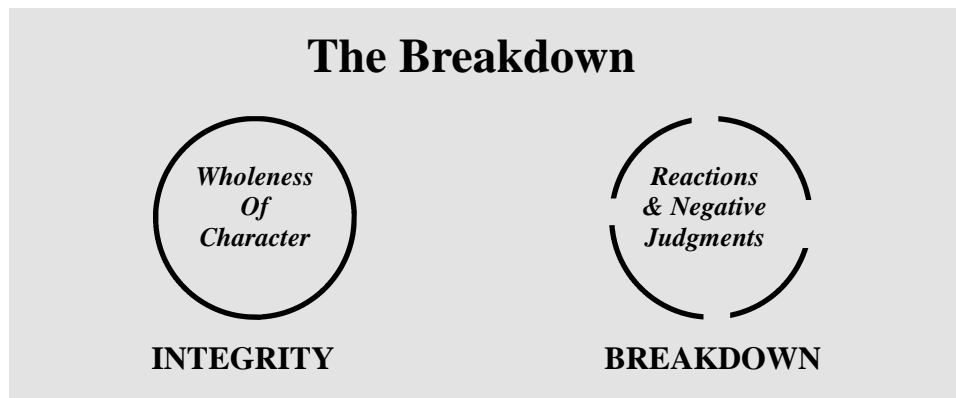
Walking in true forgiveness is a practiced skill. It would seem that it's not natural for man in his sin-conscious condition. But Christ-like forgiveness is possible, even required, as a forgiven sinner and a believer in Christ. Forgiveness begins as a decision before God. As believers, we are able to come before God and obtain grace - the God-given ability to forgive others (Hebrews 4:16). Since this is accomplished and furnished by God's Spirit, it is spiritual in nature. In other words, it contains or is made up of spiritual substance, and this spiritual substance affects the deepest core of the human being - the heart.

As a decision before God, it is independent of feelings and emotions. At first, you may not feel forgiveness or "warm feelings". Often it is our emotions which are last to line up with God's word and will. The decision is followed by attitudes and actions. Often we must bring every thought into obedience (2 Corinthians 10:5). As our hearts are filled with God's grace, our minds are renewed. There are changes in our thoughts, which in turn lead to changes in our actions and responses.

A healthy memory does not hold pain. We will remember the incident and even the pain that was caused, but active pain should not be present. Forgiveness is a release. Pain is an indicator that the healing process is not complete. The idea of forgiving but not forgetting is often an excuse to retain the offense. John 20:23 teaches us that we have the authority to forgive and release, or to hold and retain the sins of others.

Like agape, or selfless love, forgiveness springs forth from another reference point, another way of thinking and being. It flows from having eaten of the Tree of Life. The knowledge of good and evil was reserved for God alone. With His complete nature of love, He could judge good and evil. However, when Adam ate of that tree it brought forth death in humanity. Man lost the divine connection and here we are: trapped in the knowledge of good and evil, doing what we don't want to do and unable to do that which we know to be right. (Romans 7:18-23)

Forgiveness flows, then, from the life of Christ. It is part of His anointed character. It proceeds from His life and produces life in those who participate in it. And as this forgiveness is not based in our "knowledge", it flows through the whole life producing attitudes and actions. Through forgiveness, the mind can be conformed to the Word of God and renewed. Actions can follow: responses based on God's love and promises, not simply reactions based on the past.



A breakdown occurs when we allow anything to stop us from keeping our word or vows. This includes reacting rather than responding out of our covenants and promises. A breakdown is a breach of integrity; in turn, over a period of time, our character becomes impugned, flawed, even damaged. The more we react out of the past, the more the past becomes a part of our present. Ultimately, the seeds that are sown will also become our future.

To acknowledge the breakdown, recognize it for what it is and what it represents. Begin the *breakthrough* process. Simply stated, acknowledgement of a breakdown is a declaration of the need for repentance. True repentance opens the door to the land of unlimited possibilities. With the breach in your integrity closed and solid character resumed, the possible harvest and blessed opportunities are truly unlimited.



Issues of Trust

It is often assumed that forgiveness is equated with total reinstatement of trust. This is not the case. Forgiveness is not the denial of wrongs committed. It is an opening to allow restoration and trust to be rebuilt. God does not work that way, and neither should we.

Forgiveness is an opening door that promotes healing in the forgiver's heart. It allows us to proceed with a relationship in a pro-active manner. By God's grace, we can constructively begin to bring His healing to the situation and be part of His forgiveness to the one we have forgiven. Forgiveness should not be confused with the relationship itself.

Our requirement to repeatedly forgive is not for the offender alone—it is actually for the forgiver. It molds and shapes his or her heart to the will and Word of God. But even with the injunction to forgive 70 x 7, building trust is another issue in itself.

Forgiveness is Heavenly

It is the nature and character of God to forgive, and as mentioned, it is a skill which we must practice. The decision to forgive is based on God's word and aligning ourselves to it. It then must be followed by exercises of the heart. The inner being must agree with God's Word and the decision to forgive.

The heart has enemies that fight true forgiveness and release. They are:

1. *Pride*
2. *Self-righteous forgiveness*
3. *Emotional forgiveness*

Pride fills the heart and dulls its ability to respond to anything that might threaten it. Pride is the condition of being totally involved with self. It is not necessarily feelings of self-worth or accomplishment; in fact, some of the deepest, most rooted examples of pride are not positive sensations at all. Rather, some pride is self absorption in negative emotions and feelings. Pride is an inability to deal honestly with issues of self. It is often wrought with denial and justification. Its mode of operation is survival at all costs. Self-protection and justification will distort, if not defeat, true forgiveness. This kind of pride is an enemy of love and of Christ.



Self-righteous forgiveness is motivated by arrogance or a sense of superiority. It looks giving and altruistic, but in truth it is a religious, self-serving façade. It is true hypocrisy. It is an outward display labeled as forgiveness, yet the actions and deepest intentions of the heart do not follow through in love or release. This forgiveness in name only, keeps score and vies for spiritual “points”. It will often tag along with the previously mentioned pride, or the discussion of control and manipulation that follows as we explore emotional forgiveness. There may be a genuine acknowledgement for the need to forgive, even a decision to forgive, however it stops with the mental process and never proceeds to the heart.

Emotional forgiveness also begins with the acknowledgement of the need or even the decision to forgive. But it is attempted in the flesh; in other words, as an emotional gesture based on a complex, often conflicting assortment of feelings. The motivation ranges from guilt to “just wanting to feel better.” Rather than accepting the pain of the situation as discipline, or at least provocation to examine the heart in light of scripture and truth in order to bring change, the person trapped in emotional forgiveness reacts similarly to the loved ones of someone chemically dependant or alcoholic.

The co-dependant forgiver needs the approval of the one he or she “forgives”. And similarly, the forgiver uses that forgiveness as leverage to control or manipulate, again not unlike the loved one of an addict. But this too is a defeating behavior. It never produces the desired feelings. In fact, the cycle systematically robs the individual of clear thinking and genuine expressions of love, release and forgiveness.

The Breakdown/Breakthrough Model

I declare that there has been a breakdown in my life concerning _____ . I choose to forgive _____ and release this situation completely. I choose to do whatever it takes to flow in covenant, trust and commitment. Father, give me your grace to forgive, release and love. I choose to agree with you today. I further declare a breakthrough into the land of unlimited possibilities. I will not be a slave to anger, bitterness or upset, but choose to walk in Your liberty and love.



Forgiveness and Release Affect the Future

Read:

John 20:23; Matthew 7:1&2 and 18:18

This truly defines “binding and loosing”.

When we hold unforgiveness, we bind the situation to ourselves. Even if the individual or situation does change, we may not be capable of recognizing the change or cynically wait for it to revert to what we believe is the “true” condition of things. Further, the person can become bound to their condition through our unforgiveness.

Judgments such as, “he will never change”, or “what else should I expect from her”, become a form of a curse which can lock both parties into this mode until there is true repentance, forgiveness and release. Releasing judgments changes the spiritual atmosphere around people. People can be freed from this atmosphere of condemnation and truly respond to and in love, including God’s love. This is why Jesus so opposed judging another as worthless or foolish (unable to learn and thus change). In Matthew 5:22, it is clear that this attitude provokes God’s judgment.

What we hold on to has spiritual effects. In the marriage, the lack of unity in honor can even affect our prayers being answered. I Peter 3:7 admonishes us to hold one another in proper recognition so that there is no hindrance to our prayers.

Improper judgments are the products of roots of judgment and reactions to past, childhood situations that God desires to redeem and restore. These judgmental roots are related to our obedience in honoring our father and mother. In today’s culture, many people have not had the benefit of having parents who could be honored. Unfortunately, many parents today and over the course of recent years have done much to bring dishonor to the office of parent. But God’s law is not qualitative: “Honor your father and mother - it they deserve it.” No, the command is to honor and we must seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to find those things which will engender the ability to honor, if only to honor them for giving us life!

Dealing with the roots of judgment and unforgiveness will allow a deeper stream of God’s grace to enter into the marriage and relationship. This positively alters the marriage and the spouse. This release will affect every person that touches the marriage relationship. If you want to affect change in your environment, begin by apprehending God’s grace for yourself in these areas of judgment.



The Winning Formula

The Winning Formula is a way of life.

It is ongoing and repetitive.

It offers a form of safety and security by masking feelings of inadequacy.

- A façade to cover anxiety, fear, deception, etc...
 - A “persona”¹ to control or manipulate.
 - A sales pitch.
 - There are both positive and negative formulas.
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- ☺ The “How to Win Friends” style.
 - ☺ Hypochondria formula.
 - ☺ The “one-ups-manship” formula.

THE PAYOFF

False self-esteem.

Builds secure fences and walls.

Momentary sense of power and authority.

Value based on other’s appraisal.

THE COST

Integrity.

True value and worth.

Becomes a man-pleaser.

Undermines true authority.

Intimacy and vulnerability.

True self expression.

1. It is the opinion of some counselors and psychologists that some people who experience Multiple Personality Disorder are dealing with a highly refined version of these masking personas, especially without the presence of confirmed SRA or other severe trauma.



The Debt of Unforgiveness

Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, “O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me; Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?” And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. Matthew 18:32-35 (KJV)

To be forgiven as Christians, and then to not forgive those who sin against us, is to become a debtor to God. In fact, Luke 11:4 and Matthew 6:14-15 indicate that our forgiveness is linked to forgiving others.

Scripture teaches: *“Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.”* Romans 13:8 (KJV) Love is our only obligation under this perfect law of liberty.

Spiritual Oppression

One of the other things that Matthew 18:32-35 indicates is that there is torment in unforgiveness. This includes demonic torment and attack. The sin of unforgiveness opens the door to the demonic realm. Not only can this manifest in deception, but it can also manifest in health-related issues. A partial list of mental and physical illnesses known to be related to unforgiveness:

<i>Depression</i>	<i>Heart disease</i>
<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Cancer</i>
<i>Anorexia</i>	<i>Lupus</i>
<i>Schizophrenia</i>	<i>Arthritis</i>
<i>Neurosis</i>	<i>Digestive disorders</i>

This is not to say that every occurrence of these diseases is spiritual or demonic in nature. It is only to call attention to the possibility of a spiritual link to physical and mental maladies. To sow to the flesh is to reap corruption. Seek the Holy Spirit for insight. Ask Him to try your heart and search you. In today’s society, we are unskilled in knowing our own hearts.



Bitterness

Hebrews 12:15 warns of a root of bitterness that causes trouble. Roots are usually unseen sources of support and nurture. Hidden below the surface and out of sight, roots provide the nourishment for the rest of the plant. Bitter roots poison the whole plant.

The source of our roots, and often any bitterness as well, is in our childhood. Training a child in the way he or she should go is essential in forming healthy nourishing roots, able to support a healthy life and produce abundant healthy fruit.

Because even roots of bitterness provide a type of supply and nurture, they are often justified as necessary or essential, even believed to be normal. And because they are unseen, they usually go unchallenged. Years of development for these roots causes them to affect the entire structure.

Practical Forgiveness

1. The basis of all relationship relates to our childhood. Explore honoring father and mother.
2. Often, earliest childhood memories hold keys. But remember - even the best memory might be flawed. The years may have altered the facts, though the wound is still present.
3. Lack of memories may indicate a lack of bonds.
4. Know that even the best parents make mistakes.
5. Our perception may not be based in reality; spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

CHOOSE TO FORGIVE

1. **Be specific with each act of forgiveness.**
2. **If you feel haunted, it is not forgiveness yet.**
3. **Some issues involving one event may be settled, while others are not.**
4. **Don't wait for "feelings" of forgiveness.**
5. **Forgiveness is an ACT of obedience.**
 - **Begin with words.**
 - **These words should be spoken or written.**
 - **Continue the act of forgiveness with attitudes and actions.**
 - **Forgiveness may need to be held in the heart until it can be talked through.**
 - **Forgive 70 x 7 (Matthew 18:21-22), until his or her actions no longer adversely affect you. Sometimes that may have been God's plan all along!**



SUMMARY

Forgiveness is a choice which may become a lifestyle. It is the major step in becoming a person of integrity. Forgiveness opens the heart for the grace of God to be realized and actualized. Forgiveness is not a mental exercise, but a choice to participate in spiritual things: things of God and His Kingdom. Forgiveness opens the door to change - Radical Change!

AFFIRMATION

I choose a life of forgiveness and love. I will be aware of the Holy Spirit's leading in showing me people that I need to forgive and bless. I will not hold on to future breakdowns and I will not allow past upsets to rule and control my life. I will live in the I AM, allowing God to forgive and heal my past as well as guide and direct my future. I will give others the love, acceptance and esteem worthy of the life of Christ which is in me.