

To Forgive, or not to Forgive



Read: Matthew 18:21-35



What is forgiveness?



Unforgiving

adj.

1. Reluctant or refusing to forgive: an unforgiving creditor.
2. Providing little or no opportunity to forestall undesired results or mistakes: an unforgiving computer program.

‘Unforgiving’ someone means simply choosing not to forgive; but it is not that easy to do!



Read: Matthew 6:14-15



Why should we forgive ?

We should forgive because God has called us to forgive. We should forgive because there are consequences if we don't...

1. Spiritually: Unforgiveness takes away from our ability to love God.

If we fail to forgive, we break the commandments of loving God and forgiving one another.

2. Emotionally: Unforgiveness creates an emotional focus toward the person who hurt us.

This focus results in us becoming just like the one we resent.



Read: Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32.



What reasons are given here for us to forgive others when they hurt us?

How have we hurt God?

How did God demonstrate forgiveness through Jesus?

One of the main reasons we are instructed to forgive is because Jesus forgave us. Jesus is our role model on forgiveness and invites us to copy Him and to be like Him.



Read: Matthew 18:34



What are the consequences if we don't forgive ?

MOVING FROM UNFORGIVENESS TO FORGIVENESS

As we've mentioned, it's a very simple thing to say we need to forgive others, it's even a pretty easy thing to believe that we need to forgive others. But the reality is that forgiveness is not easy.

We may have hurts and resentments that are very valid and justified. People may have done some terrible things to us and we would be completely within our rights to hold that against them...



Read: Romans 6:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:15-16



If we've accepted God's forgiveness and committed ourselves to Him, what's happened to our 'right' to bear grudges or unforgiveness?

If someone has hurt us very badly, or wronged us in such a way that we simply cannot see how we could ever forgive them, even if we wanted to, then what do we do? One thing the Bible consistently stresses is that God's standards are high - perfection in-fact. The Bible also says that God doesn't ask us to do anything we cannot, with His help, do.



How does this relate to forgiveness?

Is the process of forgiveness solely our responsibility?



Read: 2 Corinthians 12:10; Hebrews 13:20-21; Philippians 4:19

God has very clearly instructed us to forgive others as He has forgiven us, He has also said that He will help us when we can't do it, that He will provide us with whatever it is we need - even with the ability to forgive.

Forgiveness begins with a desire to honour God; it starts when we say to God:

"God, I'm really hurt and I just cannot forgive this person now, but, I know you have forgiven me and I know you have commanded me to forgive, so I give you this unforgiveness and ask that you bring me to the place where I can honour you by forgiving this person. I pray that you take away this claim I'm holding onto to be unforgiving and I ask that you make me more like Jesus. Thank You that I'm not in this alone."

STEPS TO FORGIVENESS



1. PRAY (Psalm 139:23-24)

2. ASK

Ask God to reveal any hidden hurts or resentment.

3. CONFESS

Confess your unforgiveness and ask God to forgive you.

Jesus has called us all to forgive because He has forgiven us. There is freedom in forgiving; there is revival and life. Forgiveness takes the sting out of the bee. Like everything that is worth something in the eyes of God, it comes at a sacrifice, but remember, the greatest sacrifice of all was for the forgiveness of our sins; we don't deserve not to forgive.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you

NIV EPHESIANS 4:32

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