



Forgiveness Leaders Notes



There are many good articles and books on forgiveness probably because we struggle with it so much. This is a short collection of material to help leaders teach on this topic.

Bible references

Genesis 37-50, excluding 38; 48; 49
Luke 11:4 – forgive us as we forgive others
Psalm 103:8-12 - as far as the east is from the west ...
Romans 8:28 – God works everything for good ...
1 Samuel 18-31 - The story of David and Saul
Luke 7:37-50 - The parable of the two debtors
Matthew 18:21-35 - The parable of the unforgiving servant

What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is NOT

- Approving what they did
- Denying to yourself that it has hurt you
- Pretending to others that you are fine
- Forgetting - if the offense is big, you may never forget, but you can still forgive.
- Doing nothing to change a situation
- Reconciliation - It takes one person to forgive, it takes two people to be reunited.

Forgiveness IS

- Choosing not to get your own back. Forgiveness says, "I could, but I won't."
- Choosing to be kind when to do so would be an effort.
- Choosing to be unselfish when the opposite is much more attractive.
- Choosing not to dwell on it in your mind. Ask God to help you not to think about it.
- Choosing to let it go. One woman wrote, "I used to replay the video tapes of what he said and did over and over in my mind. Then one day I let it all go and I was free."
- Choosing not to keep talking about it because that will keep it alive and hurting.
- Re-forgiving when it all comes flooding back. Forgiving is not a one-off act, it is an ongoing attitude
- A peaceful state of mind
- Praying that God would bless them

For Reflection

It is impossible to live on this fallen planet without getting hurt, offended, misunderstood, lied to, and rejected.

Forgiveness brings peace and creates the attitude necessary to make a new beginning. It allows people to move on.

You have a straight choice: pain or peace. Hold on to the hurt and it corrodes everything. Replay it in your mind, over and over, and the pain will grow and perhaps become hate. Let the hurt go and, though it may take time, the pain will go. It's forgive or fester.

Forgiveness is not saying that things are okay now, and then going back into an abusive situation. It is not letting someone off the hook by saying, "You didn't do anything wrong."

Some people think that forgiveness is unconditional love with no boundaries or accountability. It is not. Forgiveness is not denial that a hurtful situation exists, and it isn't denying the fact that your feelings are hurt. And forgiveness does not mean you accept the person's behavior. Having a nature of not forgiving others brings about bitterness, and bitterness has been linked to stress-related illnesses by some medical researchers. By forgiving others, we free ourselves spiritually and emotionally. Forgiveness is an act of our own personal will, trusting God to bring emotional healing.

People who have experienced abuse, trauma, or loss need time to sort things out and let God bring them to the place of forgiveness in His time. God's timing is always the right time for each individual. The act of forgiving others is between us and God. The only time we need to forgive a person face-to-face is at the moment we are asked by that person to forgive them for the hurt they have caused.

There are things we can do to help those struggling with the forgiveness of others. We can support them with encouraging words and by listening to them. Taking our time and being gentle with them will allow them to progress through the steps of forgiveness the way God wants them to proceed.

It's much easier to forgive others once we realize how much God has forgiven us.

Forgiving can be difficult. We need God's grace to help us. In Hebrew the word "grace / chen" denotes the **stronger coming to the help of the weaker** who stands in need of help by reason of his circumstances or natural weakness."¹

Quotes

- Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting. William Arthur Ward
- I've learned that no matter how good a friend someone is, they're going to hurt you every once in a while, and you must forgive them for that.
- Always forgive your enemies - nothing annoys them so much. Oscar Wilde
- Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.
- "One of the secrets of a long and fruitful life is to forgive everybody everything before you go to bed." Ann Landers
- To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. Lewis B. Smedes
- Forgiveness is not about forgetting. It's about letting go of another person's throat.
The Shack: William P Young
- To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. Robert Muller
- The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. Mahatma Gandhi
- When a deep injury is done us, we never recover until we forgive" Paul Boese
- Never forget the three powerful resources you always have available to you: love, prayer, and forgiveness." H. Jackson Brown, Jr.
- The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world.
Marianne Williamson
- Forgiveness gives freedom. Freedom makes your heart open toward other people. P. Hanes

Longer/more adult quotes

- Vengeance is having a videotape planted in your soul that cannot be turned off. It plays the painful scene over and over again inside your mind... And each time it plays you feel the clap of pain again... Forgiving turns off the videotape of pained memory. Forgiving sets you free."
Lewis B. Smedes
- "When you hold resentment toward another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free." Catherine Ponder
- There is an important difference between trust and forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the past. Trust has to do with future behaviour. It must be rebuilt over time. It requires a track record. You are not expected to trust them immediately and you are not expected to continue allowing them to hurt you. Rick Warren
- Don't worry about whether the other person apologizes. Don't worry about whether or not they understand you. Just love them and release them. After a few years they may reach a point where they do understand.
- When we forgive evil, we do not excuse it, we do not tolerate it, we do not smother it. We look the evil full in the face, call it what it is... and only then do we forgive it. Lewis B. Smedes
- I believe this is **keeping more people from having power with God** than any other thing — they are not willing to cultivate the spirit of forgiveness. ² D. L. Moody
- Forgiveness is an active struggle, not a passive act of letting anger diminish over time. Pavel Hanes

Sack of Spuds

A college professor, teaching on the weight of unforgiveness, asked each of her students to bring a sack of potatoes to class.

For each person they refused to forgive, they had to select a potato and write the date on it beside that person's name. Then for a month, without fail, they had to carry that sack of potatoes with them everywhere they went.

After lugging those sacks around for a while each student began to recognize how much weight they were carrying, the amount of energy it took to focus on their bag, and that they had to be careful not to leave it in the wrong place.

Eventually, as the potatoes began to rot and stink, they realized that getting rid of them was the only sensible move. Extract from Word 4U 2Day 06 Sep 2012: <http://www.ucb.co.uk>

A positive story from a self-help web site:

<http://www.kikiramsey.com/the-keys-to-forgiveness-will-set-you-free/>

The burnt toast story by Abhinav Duggal:

<http://inspiringquotes.in/inspirational-life-story-keys-to-creating-a-healthy-growing-and-lasting-relationship/#more-8439>

Sources

- <http://www.allaboutgod.com/definition-for-forgiveness-faq.htm>
- www.thinkexist.com
- Emmanuel church notice sheet sermon summary
- The Care for the Family web site article on 'The Highway Code for Marriage', by Hilary and Michael Perrot, published by CWR www.careforthefamily.org.uk
- <http://www.ucb.co.uk> Word 4U 2Day is produced by UCB. Free issues are available in the UK and online
- ¹ ESSER, H.-H. *Grace*. In: BROWN, C. (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology 2*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, p. 116
- ² MOODY, D. L. *Prevailing Prayer*, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1885, p. 59

Credits:

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