



# Hope Through Forgiveness

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## I. Forgiveness Brings The Gospel To Life, Yet There Is An Undercurrent Of Fear In Regards To Forgiving

### A. Four common responses that evidence the fear of forgiving:

1. If I forgive, there will be no justice, and the one who sinned against me will go free.
2. Forgiveness means I pretend nothing every happened.
3. If I forgive, I will be vulnerable to the same thing again.
4. My unforgiveness is justified, because I am right.

### B. Why is forgiveness important?

1. Man's greatest need is \_\_\_\_\_. Without forgiveness, man is doomed to eternal punishment (**Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:11-15**).
2. \_\_\_\_\_ requires forgiveness (**Colossians 2:13**).
3. Seeking and receiving forgiveness is a prerequisite to \_\_\_\_\_ love (**John 13:35**).
4. \_\_\_\_\_ relationships between Christians hinder evangelism, do not glorify God, and rob churches of being a witness to the community (**2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Titus 2:5**).

### C. What is forgiveness?

#### 1. Definition of forgiveness:

- a. "Forgiveness is a lifting of the charge of guilt, a formal declaration of that fact, and a promise (made and kept) never to remember the wrong against that person in the future" (Jay Adams, *Theology of Christian Counseling*).
- b. To forgive as the Lord forgives, we must release the person who has wronged us from any penalty that separates. Forgiveness may be described by the following three promises to forgive as God does, on three levels:
  - "In my thoughts - I will not dwell on the incident or replay it in my mind."
  - "In my speech - I will not talk about the incident with the forgiven person or with others."
  - "In my actions - I will not allow the incident to embitter me against the forgiven person and use it to hurt them."
- c. By making and keeping these promises, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your \_\_\_\_\_. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs. This is

exactly what God does for us, and it is what He calls us to do for others. (The idea of forgiveness promises comes from Ken Sande’s *The Peacemaker*.)

2. Why forgive?

- a. We are able to forgive only when we have \_\_\_\_\_ our own sin and have been forgiven. An inability to forgive means we do not view our own sin against God as seriously as we view others’ sin against us.
  
- B. God \_\_\_\_\_ us to forgive others as He has forgiven us (**Ephesians 4:32**). Jesus said that if we don’t forgive others, we will not be forgiven (**Matthew 6:14-15**).
  
- c. Sin requires forgiveness if \_\_\_\_\_ is to occur.
  - Apologies like “I’m sorry,” or responses like “That’s OK” don’t settle sin issues.
  - Sin must be confessed (*eg. God has convicted me of my sin of... I confess it to Him and to you*) and forgiveness sought (*eg. I want to ask your forgiveness for... Will you please forgive me?*).
  - Sin must be forgiven (*eg. I forgive you*) – promises made and kept.

3. Forgiveness has two aspects: attitudinal and transactional

- a. We must have a spirit of attitudinal forgiveness even if there is not yet a transaction of forgiveness (**Mark 11:25; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59**).

**D. Misconceptions about forgiveness**

1. Some people say it is hypocritical to forgive when you don’t “feel” like it.

- a. It is a misconception that forgiveness is a \_\_\_\_\_ (**Luke 17:3-10**).
  - We can’t command feelings. God commands us to forgive as an act of obedient service. Feelings are a manifestation of thoughts (**John 13:17, James 1:25**).
  - Forgiveness is not an act of the emotions, but an act of the will.
  - Forgiveness is to be granted when a sinner repents (**Luke 17:3-4a**).
  - Forgiveness is to be granted repeatedly, even the same day (**Luke 17:4b**).
  - Christ declared that it is whom we put our faith in that determines whether we forgive or not (**Luke 17:5-6, John 16:9**).
  - Forgiveness is a matter of obedience, not feelings (**Matthew 6:14-15**).
  
- b. Forgiveness begins with an attitudinal choice, whenever you have something \_\_\_\_\_ someone (**Colossians 3:13**)
  - Even if a sinner does not repent, there is to be attitudinal forgiveness (**Mark 11:25-26**). This is what Christ modeled on the cross, and Steven exemplified as he was being stoned (**Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60**).
  
- c. If people don’t ask, we don’t \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness. To do so would be a method of devious and dishonest confrontation.

2. Some people think they must \_\_\_\_\_ to forgive.
  - a. It is a misconception that we are commanded to forget before we forgive.
  - b. Forgiving is active. Forgetting is passive and frequently happens when we grant biblical forgiveness, thereby choosing not to remember.
  - c. Scripture says that God promises not to remember our sins against us (**Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:34**).
3. Some people think that to forgive is to \_\_\_\_\_ sin.
  - a. It is a misconception that forgiveness includes excusing sin. Excusing sin is a form of minimizing sin; of not taking it seriously.
  - b. Forgiveness includes viewing sin the way God sees it. God paid a great price to forgive our sins, and excusing sin in effect tramples Christ’s work on the cross.
  - c. You don’t forgive because it’s OK, but rather because of the blood of Jesus Christ (**Colossians 3:13, Hebrews 9:22**).
  - d. Minimizing sin leads to a loss of hope for the sinner, as it stops a clear conscience.

## II. Biblically Refuting Four False Beliefs Regarding Forgiveness

- A. If I forgive, there will be no justice, and the one who sinned against me will go free.
  1. Biblical truth—God only knows what is just and will punish all sin. Those who never confess their sin at the cross will be punished. Sin requires shed blood, either Jesus’ or the sinner’s.
- B. Forgiveness means I pretend nothing ever happened.
  1. Biblical truth—Forgiveness is not denial, forgiveness is based on Christ being punished. The debt Jesus talks about in His stories is real and is not minimized. He paid a horrible, serious payment for sin, because sin is always serious.
- C. If I forgive, I will be vulnerable to the same thing again.
  1. Biblical truth—Forgiving doesn’t mean the person is safe and must be trusted. It does mean that rather than dwelling on it or talking about it, I trust God and live according to His wisdom.
- D. My unforgiveness is justified because I am right. If I forgive, the sinner will never see the wrong and repent.
  1. Biblical truth—Unforgiveness only hurts me, and allows what the sinner did to control my life, instead of denying myself, taking up my cross and walking in the victory of the cross and the resurrection.

## III. Homework Idea Regarding Forgiving the Way God Does

Assign studying and memorizing: **Psalm 103:1-13**  
Assign ‘Forgiveness Card’



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR "HOPE THROUGH FORGIVENESS" CAN INCLUDE:**

Adams, Jayô *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, Calvary Press  
Barthel , Tara Klena and Dabler, Judyô *Peacemaking Women*, Baker Books  
DeMoss, Nancy Leighô *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom*, Moody Publishers  
Green, Robô *Forgiveness, Showing Grace When You have Been Hurt*, Faith Resources  
Jones, Robertô *Forgiveness, I Just Can't Forgive Myself*, P&R Publishing  
Priolo , Louô *Bitterness*, P & R Publishing  
Sande, Kenô *The Peace Maker*, Baker Books