

## Forgiveness

It's tough to forgive, especially when we face the repercussions of someone's poor choices. To forgive others, we have to lean into God's love and forgiveness. He enables us to do what we couldn't do on our own.

It's normal to want to seek revenge, or "get even" with those who have caused pain in our lives. Although forgiveness isn't always our first thought, it's a response we can offer with God's help.

When we ask God for the strength to forgive those who have wronged us, we begin the healing process and extend the same grace Christ extended to us when He paid the ultimate price for our sins by dying on the cross. We acknowledge that what that person did was wrong and condemn the action, but we choose to let that person off the hook, just as Christ let us off the hook. Forgiveness doesn't mean continuing in a harmful relationship — we forgive but are free to not engage in ongoing communication or companionship.

Forgiveness is choosing to quit carrying the weight of what happened — to not seek revenge or hold a grudge. We become free to love that person as God loves and accepts us.

When we forgive others, God is free to forgive us. "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins," Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV).

When it becomes difficult for us to find the strength to forgive, let's ask God to break our hearts towards compassion and recognition of God's quick and unwavering grace. Forgiveness requires an ongoing dependence on God.

It's a scary and vulnerable feeling to pray for forgiveness toward those who have wronged us, but when we do, God promises to break down walls of our past hurts and hang-ups. Ultimately, in our pursuit of being more like Christ, we have faith that God will transform our hearts and the hearts of others.

Through the gift of forgiveness, we can truly live free.

The following suggestions will help you walk through the process of forgiveness.

- Forgive yourself. The biggest thing holding you back spiritually may be letting yourself off the hook.
- Forgive those who have wronged you. Who comes to mind? Express forgiveness in prayer.
- Whenever you're reminded of the wrong, offer a prayer of forgiveness.

- Is there a family member or friend you're avoiding because of unforgiveness? Forgive them, and if appropriate, take a step to reconciliation through a phone call or letter.
- There are some instances where the wound that was inflicted was so severe that an important action step is to process the experience with a trusted, experienced and godly professional. Don't be afraid to reach out in this way to process your pain and move toward healing and forgiveness.
- Maybe you realize you've wronged someone. Call that person today and ask for forgiveness.