

Freedom Week 7

Forgiveness

(Ephesians 1:7) He is so **rich in kindness** and **grace** that He **purchased** our freedom with the blood of His Son and **forgave** our sins.

Because we live in a fallen world, **we face the realities of hurt and offense**. The **words** and **deeds** of others can **wound us** to the core in indescribable ways. Things like neglect, rejection, abuse, violence, discrimination, betrayal, and cruel remarks can cause bitterness and resentment to infiltrate our hearts, and we, perhaps even unintentionally, begin to harbor **unforgiveness**.

Reasons We May Struggle to Forgive

1. We have a wrong idea of forgiveness.

The first reason we don't offer forgiveness easily to others is that we have an **incorrect definition** of forgiveness. To truly understand what it means to forgive someone, we need to start by learning what **forgiveness is not**.

- **Forgiveness is not minimizing the offense.**

Offering forgiveness to someone who has wronged you is not saying, **"It's not a big deal,"** or, **"It didn't really hurt."** What was done or said was not right, and **harm never reflects the Father's heart for you**. God's **perfect will** is to **protect you and nurture you**. When you **choose to forgive**, you choose not to hang on to the offense because it **robs you of freedom**.

- **Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened.**

Sometimes we think in order to forgive someone, we must forget what happened. **"Forgive and forget"** is a cliché that holds no truth. The reality is, **we may never forget what has happened to us**. But God wants to do something extraordinary in our lives. He wants to bring **healing** to our hearts so we can remember these past experiences without **reliving** the pain associated with them. God wants to show you how He can make all things new.

- **Forgiveness is not reconciliation.**

We often make reconciliation a caveat for our forgiveness, saying, "When they apologize, I will forgive them." In doing so, we actually become a hostage to the very one who has wronged us because it leaves our freedom up to another person. Letting go of offense does not mean that you must reconcile with the person. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with

everyone.” God understands that there are times when reconciliation may not be the best choice. If the offender is not ready to reconcile, it will only cause further pain and disappointment when you are exposed to the same circumstances. In such situations, rely on the Holy Spirit to lead you. Begin by allowing the miracle of forgiveness to happen in you.

Reconciliation is a two-way street. If you’ve forgiven someone and desire to restore the relationship, use wisdom throughout the process. The door to reconciliation may be open if you see the following in the other person:

- Repentance: Turning away from wrong actions and going in the opposite direction
- Restitution: Making things right if possible
- Rebuilding Trust: Proving themselves consistent in words and actions

2. We don’t think it’s fair.

The second reason we don’t offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us is that it does not seem fair to let them off the hook. We reason in our minds that they don’t deserve forgiveness. But God doesn’t use “fairness” logic—and thank goodness, because none of us deserve forgiveness!

3. We don’t think we can do it.

The third reason we don’t forgive is that we don’t think we have the power and strength to do so. This idea is from the enemy. We must recognize and silence the voice of our adversary. In our own human power, we may not be strong enough to forgive the great wrongs done against us, but we don’t have to walk through this Christian life in our own strength. We are empowered by the supernatural strength of God.

The Forgiven Forgive

(Ephesians 4:31-32) Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, **be kind** to each other, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

It is impossible to forgive others of their offenses until we receive forgiveness for ourselves. If we struggle with forgiveness, **chances are we have not fully grasped what God has done for us.** We have been given **total forgiveness for past, present, and future sin.** It is not that God forgets our sins, but rather, **He chooses to remember our sin no more.** (Isaiah 43:25, Hebrews 8:12, Psalm 103:12).

He chooses to never mention our sin again—ever. Why does He do this? Because God desperately wants to be in relationship with us.

The Unforgiveness Trap

An offense is something we consider to be a violation of what we think is right and fair. We need to understand that the enemy uses offense **to hold us captive and keep us from moving forward** in the **freedom** that God has for us.

The word offense comes from the Greek word *“scandalon,”* which means *“the bait.”* In Old Testament times, when someone wanted to trap an animal, they would cover a pit with branches and place a piece of flesh (*scandalon*) on top of the branches to lure the animal into the trap.

Satan uses offense as bait to lure us into a trap of unforgiveness and bondage. By holding on to offense, we think we are trapping the person who hurt us, but in reality, we are the ones who are ensnared.

Five common snares that the enemy uses to lure us into unforgiveness.

When we are...

Betrayed – by a best friend who lied, a spouse who didn’t stay forever, a confidant who broke our trust

Falsely Accused – misunderstood, the subject of gossip and slander

Rejected – by a spouse, friend, trusted authority, or even a church

Abused – emotionally, physically, verbally, or sexually

Discriminated Against – because of our race, socioeconomic status, religion, or gender

Humiliated – haunted by an embarrassing moment, ashamed, disgraced

Remember Jesus was...

Betrayed – by Judas, a trusted friend and one of His disciples (Luke 22)

Falsely Accused – wrongly indicted in several courts (Mark 14)

Rejected – by Peter, one of His disciples and closest companions (Luke 22)

Abused – beaten, tortured, cursed, and crucified on a cross (Luke 22, John 19)

Discriminated Against – taunted and insulted by the Romans because of His race and hated by religious leaders for His beliefs (Matthew 27)

Humiliated – crucified and disgraced in a public setting (John 19)

To get a better understanding of why Jesus had to suffer in the way He did, read Hebrews 2:17–18 in The Message translation:

That’s why He had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when He came before God as high priest to get rid of the people’s sins, He would have already experienced it all Himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed.

It was important for Jesus to experience all of these offenses in a human body so that He could understand every struggle we would encounter.

Living an Unoffended Life

How do we keep our hearts pure and unoffended?

Consider these three simple statements:

1. **Recognize our own imperfection.**

*****We will never have to forgive others for more than God has forgiven us.*****

“Our debt to God is infinitely beyond our capacity to pay. Our debt to God is infinitely greater than any person’s debt to us. When we truly experience God’s forgiveness for our sins it will transform us into forgiving people.” – Randy Alcorn

2. **Focus on the real enemy.**

People are not our enemy—the devil is. Jesus made a choice to see the people with the hammer and nails as unknowing participants in Satan’s agenda of darkness. If it is true that hurting people hurt people, then the guilty have their own story as well. Our approach should be to love people and hate the devil.

3. **Receive the love of God.**

This will give us the capacity to love others. If we continually struggle to love people, it may be because **we have not fully received the love of God.**

(I John 4:19 TPT) Our **love for others** is our grateful **response** to the love God first **demonstrated** to us.

(John 7:47) Therefore, I tell you, **her many sins have been forgiven**—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Forgiveness in Action

The Bible’s steps for walking out forgiveness are **countercultural** (the opposite of mainstream society) and **counterintuitive** (different than what would be expected).

(I Corinthians 1:25-28) For the **foolishness of God** is wiser than human wisdom, and **the weakness of God** is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the **foolish things of the world to shame the wise**; God chose **the weak things of the world to shame the strong**. God chose the **lowly things** of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are.

Daily Steps for Walking Out Forgiveness

1. Pray for people who have offended you.

(Matthew 5:43-44) You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,**

2. Bless people who have offended you.

(Luke 6:27-28) “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, **love** your enemies! **Do good** to those who hate you. **Bless** those who curse you. **Pray** for those who hurt you.”

3. Do good to people who have offended you.

(I Peter 3:9 TPT) Never **retaliate** when someone treats you wrongly, nor **insult** those who insult you, but instead, respond by speaking a **blessing over them**—because a blessing is what God promised to give you.

Forgiving Ourselves

Getting past your past may be the biggest obstacle you face. Every time you seem to be making progress, that old movie reel of the sinful things you have done begins to play in your mind. Peace and freedom slip away as your past rises up to remind you of your failure. You think forgiveness is for other people but not for you, because you have done too many horrible things and it's just too late.

Getting Past the Past

To let our past die, we must change our way of thinking. The old way of thinking doesn't line up with God's Word, so it doesn't produce life.

"Our life is always moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts. Most of life's battles are won or lost in the mind." – Craig Groeschel

1. Stop trying to earn forgiveness.

(Ephesians 2:8-9) For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **through faith**—and this is not from yourselves, it is the **gift of God**—not by works, so that no one can boast.

2. Receive God's forgiveness by faith.

3. Defeat every lie with the truth.

It would be great if once we had received forgiveness, we never thought about our past again. The truth is, the enemy will continue to bring up our past every day. He will wait for weak moments in our lives and whisper our failures to us.

(Psalm 1:2 AMP) But his **delight** is in the law of the Lord, And on His law [His precepts and teachings] he [habitually] **meditates** day and night.