

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS IN OUR LIVES

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Forgiveness is one of central themes of the Bible. In fact the word forgive appears 116 times in the New International Version of the Bible!

In this study I want to look at what forgiveness is, list some of the positive aspects of forgiveness, the negative aspects of un-forgiveness and share some Bible verses to give us some practical advice that will help. I will also share some of my personal experience with un-forgiveness and how God helped me to deal with it.

What is forgiveness?

Forgive: 1. To give up the wish to punish or get even with; not have hard feelings at or toward; pardon excuse; She forgave her brother for breaking her doll. Please forgive my mistake.

2. To give up all claim to; not demand payment for; to forgive debt.
To give forgiveness; pardon.

Forgiveness: 1. The act of forgiving; pardon: Prayer can be a plea for forgiveness that would otherwise remain unuttered
2. Willingness to forgive: His forgiveness made her realize how unselfish he was.
3. Remission of a debt, obligation, or penalty.
(The World Book Dictionary pg 828)

The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology by Millard J Erickson defines **forgiveness** as pardon from sin

Aspects of forgiveness/un-forgiveness

As you can imagine there are both negative aspects of un-forgiveness and some positive aspects of forgiveness and letting go. Here are a few of each below.

Negative

- Anger
- Bitterness and hatred
- Division (family, friends, church, work etc)
- Physical and mental illness (Stress)
- Energy and time goes
- Stand still in parts or all of your life as it stops you from moving on
- Relationships with family, friends, colleagues and others by suffer greatly
- Christian witness and usefulness to God can by disenhibited
- Relationship with God can suffer...loss of fellowship
- Beachhead for Satan

Positive

- Freedom from anger
- Freedom from bitterness
- Decrease chance of division
- Decrease chance of physical and mental illness (example less stress)
- Freedom to move on from the past
- Improved relationships with people without the tension
- Strengthened relationship with God therefore
- Christian witness and usefulness restored
- Removal of beachhead for Satan to get into our lives

My personal experience with un-forgiveness

I have had forgiveness issues that I believe have partly held me back due to a few situations and circumstances that occurred especially a few years ago in 2004.

I felt my whole world was falling around me. I had been living in the past trapped by un-forgiveness towards certain people and places. It seemed so unfair the way I was treated. I felt severely wronged and in a sense out of control of what was going on.

Un-forgiveness stopped me from moving on until I dealt with it before God and in the case of one of situations I had to go and see the other party. I needed to forgive and claim God's freedom in forgiveness and move on. If the other party doesn't it is not my problem any longer. I am free. There was a time for mourning but the time for mourning is over. Today is a New Day....TIME TO MOVE ON...

What does the Bible say in a practical sense?

The Bible gives us some practical advice on forgiveness and how we should go about it.

Who to forgive?

Luke 11:4 - "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us".

How much to forgive?

Matthew 18:21-22 - "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

How and Why?

Colossians 3:13 - "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you".

James 5:16 - "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Ephesians 4:26 - "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry".

In Matthew 18:15-17 there are some guidelines for settling a dispute with someone. It says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. 'If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector".

Ultimate Forgiveness

In the Old Testament we see that atonement for sins is required and that this was done through the sacrificial system. In the New Testament Jesus Christ became the sacrifice for atonement once and forever. Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. We see this authority in Luke 5:24 when he healed the paralytic man.

Jesus in Luke chapter 8 forgave a woman caught in adultery. "No one, sir" she said. "Then neither do I condemn you?" Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin (Luke 8:11). In forgiving her, Jesus did not just save her, but gave her the chance to change the direction of her life and experience freedom through forgiveness from her previous sinful life.

Jesus is the ultimate forgiver, He loved us so much. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life".

Un-forgiveness whatever the cause unsolved and not dealt with has the potential to hold apart if not all of your life in the past, embitter you, it can make you physically or mental sick and negate your witness for Christ.

How about you?

If there is un-forgiveness in your life.....deal with it! Involve our God...who is strong and mighty and enjoy the freedom and release that only He can bring.