

Help Series

FORGIVENESS

How to forgive when I just don't think I can



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How to Forgive

Hello, my peacemaking friend~

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4: 32, NASB95)

This booklet will help you understand and work through the process of forgiveness. Please pray as you begin, then watch and listen for God's direction through the Bible story and the journaling suggestions. The steps described in this booklet don't guarantee a certain result, but they will help you to walk in forgiveness.

One of the greatest stories in the Bible, told in the most detail, is the story of Joseph and how he forgave his brothers, who had sold him into slavery. Genesis 45 contains one of the climaxes in Joseph's amazing story:

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished."'"

"Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here."

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him. (Genesis 45:1-15, NASB95)

God will be faithful to help you and give you peace in the midst of your struggle. He will enable you by the power of his Spirit to accomplish his purposes.

Grace and peace to you,



P. Brian Noble

STEP 1 - Remember how willing God is to forgive you.

An important part of the process is receiving forgiveness yourself. Have you already been honest with God about your wrongs in this situation, and received his gift of forgiveness? If not, do that now before continuing through the other steps. Read Luke 6:42 prayerfully, then describe your “log” briefly in the space below.

Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. (Luke 6:42, NASB)

Items [logs] you need to confess to God

Read each of the Bible verses below out loud and thoughtfully. In the first space, write your name. Write “me” in each of the other spaces.

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18, NASB95)

God draws _____ closer when He grants forgiveness.

“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.” (Isaiah 44:22, NASB95)

When God forgives _____, he erases my sins.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12, NASB95)

When God forgives _____, he removes my sins from me.

He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19, NASB95)

When God forgives _____, he throws my sins into the ocean.

“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43:25, NASB95)

When God forgives _____, he chooses not to remember my sins.

STEP 2 - Remember how willing God is to forgive the other person(s)

The Lord offers forgiveness to anyone who admits to him what they have done. Read the same Bible verses out loud, putting the other person's (people's) name(s) in each space.

... bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Colossians 3:13, NASB)

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STEP 3 - Set a timeline for your forgiveness.

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5, NASB95)

God places a very short timeframe on his anger, because he deeply desires to have no barriers between himself and his children. He also wants us to have an attitude of forgiveness toward others.

But what if another person hasn't yet said "I'm sorry" or apologized? With God's help, we can "extend" forgiveness to someone even when they haven't repented. Extending forgiveness means we are letting go of the offense and leaving it with the Lord. We are entrusting our pain to the Lord; we believe that he will handle any appropriate justice. Even when the other person hasn't yet expressed sorrow for their part in the offense, extending forgiveness can set us free from resentment (Hebrews 12:15), whether our action is spoken or just between us and the Lord. A bonus is that doing this prepares us for the day when the other person does apologize.

And what if I don't feel like forgiving? Forgiveness isn't a feeling; it's an action that the Lord enables us to take. The practice of "not remembering" an offense against someone (Isaiah 43:25) will help decrease your feelings over time. If you are struggling with unforgiveness, which is natural, prayerfully review Steps 1 and 2 to help you work through the feelings.

The name(s) of the person(s) you are extending forgiveness to:

What are you forgiving her / him / them for?

Date on which you are releasing this matter to God to be the judge (Romans 12:19):

STEP 10 - Consider when and where you will communicate your forgiveness.

Would it be good to meet with the other person(s) soon? Think about what timing would serve the other person well.

What time of day and for how long? (Always allow some extra time.)

Would a meal be appropriate for this conversation? Would simply meeting at a coffee shop be better? Explain.

What location would be conducive for this kind of conversation?

Will you or the other person need childcare?

Items to consider bringing:

____ your Bible

____ a pen/paper for each person

*For more detailed help with how to have difficult conversations, you may order a copy of Peacemaker Ministries' **Path of a Peacemaker Reconciliation Guide**. Or you may contact us at 800-711-7118 or mail@pm.training.*



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