

Healthy Relationships - Four Types of Forgiveness

Introduction

- How many of you would like healthier relationships?
- How many would like greater spiritual and psychological well-being?
- How many would like less anxiety, stress and hostility in your life?
- How many of you would like to have lower blood pressure?
- How many of you would like to have less depression?
- How many of you would like to have less susceptibility to alcohol and substance abuse?

¹In an article published by the Mayo Clinic, they say that “letting go of bitterness can make way for compassion, kindness, and peace. Forgiveness can lead to:

- Healthier relationships
- Greater spiritual and psychological well-being
- Less anxiety, stress and hostility
- Lower blood pressure
- Fewer symptoms of depression
- Lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse

This is pretty remarkable coming from a secular medical clinic. The evidence and the statistics clearly show that unforgiveness causes many medical problems in people. In a book called, *What Your Future Holds and What You Can Do To Change It*, Deborah Finley shares:

²“According to studies, Doctors have found that there is a huge relationship between forgiveness and health. The fact is after being hurt, angry, suffering loss, real or false guilt, or envy, the blocked love flow profoundly affects the way your body functions, thus your health. This can cause alteration in the pattern of chemicals and electricity in your body. It also disrupts the harmony of the brain waves, making you less able to think clearly and to make good decisions.”

She goes on to say that “unforgiveness distresses your muscular-skeletal system by increasing forehead muscle tension, thereby producing headaches, and by also producing other symptoms: stomach aches, muscle tension, joint pain/aches, dizziness and tiredness. For example, your muscles may tighten, causing imbalances or pain in your neck, back and limbs. There is decreased blood flow to the joint surfaces. This makes it more difficult for the blood to remove wastes from the tissues. It reduces the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the cells. This increases chances of delayed or inadequate repair during sleep, impairing recovery from injury, arthritis, etc. It can cause your teeth to clench at night contributing to problems with your teeth and jaw joints. Injury through inattention, accident, or violence is more likely. The peptide and hormonal chemical “messengers” are altered in every system of the body. The blood flow to your heart is constricted.”

¹(<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/forgiveness/MH00131>)

²*What Your Future Holds and What You Can Do To Change It*, by Debroah Finley.

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She goes on to say, “the effects when you are unforgiving to yourself can include depression; low self esteem...ulcers...People who are unwilling to forgive may feel they are punishing the other person but the only person paying the price is themselves.”

In this series on Healthy Relationships we have covered trust, honor, love, and communication. We looked at how to become good listeners, and also how to have the tongue of a disciple. One of the things that we have consistently seen in all these messages is we all fall short of the mark at times.

When we miss the mark, people lose trust in us. When others miss the mark, we lose trust in them. Any breach in the relationship can cause a loss of trust. Sometimes we act selfishly instead of in love. Sometimes we fall short in our listening skills. And oftentimes we find ourselves like Isaiah or James and stumble in the things that we say.

There is a Greek word that describes this problem; it is hamartia. It is used 174 times in the New Testament. The root word is hamartano and it means to miss the mark. In most cases, the word is translated as sin.

G266. hamartia, ham-ar'-tee'-ah; from G264; sin (prop. abstr.):--offence, sin (-ful).

G264. hamartano, ham-ar-tan'-o; perh. from G1 (as a neg. particle) and the base of G3313; prop. to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), i.e. (fig.) to err, esp. (mor.) to sin.--for you're faults, offend, sin, trespass.

The Bible says that we all sin. Solomon said that there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Paul says in Romans that we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Because of our sin, we fall short of the glory of God. Our sins separate us from God. God is a holy God and our sins separate us from Him.

Ecc 7:20 "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins."

(Romans 3:23) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

The good news is that God did not leave us in our sinful condition. God had a plan of redemption. He had a plan to deal with our sins. In Isaiah 53:6, we find that all of us like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

(Isaiah 53:6) "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him."

Paul puts it a little differently. He says that “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God’s plan was to send His only begotten Son to live a holy and sinless life and for Him to take the punishment for our sins, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He sent Jesus to die on our behalf so that our sins could be forgiven.

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(2 Corinthians 5:21) "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

(John 3:16) ""For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Just as our sins separated us from God, our sins separate us from one another. And, since we all sin, we are constantly being separated from one another by these breaches in our relationships. If we are going to have healthy relationships with one another, we must learn how to deal with these breaches in our relationships. In the same way that God chose to forgive us of our sins so that we could have fellowship with Him, we have to forgive one another so that our fellowship with one another can be restored.

This morning, we are going to look at forgiveness. Specifically, we are going to look at four areas of forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness from God
2. Forgiveness from Others
3. Forgiveness to Others
4. Forgiveness of Ourselves

1. Forgiveness from God.

In Psalms 51, we find the account of David repenting because of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. (See 2 Samuel 11:1-17.) Nathan, the prophet, goes to David and confronts him about his sin. David acknowledges his sin, and in Psalms 51 we find the words of a repentant man. In verses 1-3 he asks God to be gracious to him, and to blot out his transgressions. He asks God to wash him thoroughly from his iniquity, and to cleanse him from his sins.

(Psalms 51:1-3) "(For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him,) (after he had gone in to Bathsheba.) Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. {2} Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. {3} For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me."

In verse four, David says, "against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned." That is difficult for me. I think that David sinned against Uriah. He violated Uriah's wife. He had Uriah put to death. He sinned against Uriah. But what David is getting to in this verse is that every sin that we commit is ultimately against God. We may sin against others, but **our sins are ultimately against God.**

(Psalms 51:4) "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge."

Jesus taught this to us in the parable of the sheep and the goats. He tells the righteous that they fed the hungry, clothed the poor, etc. He tells the wicked or the goats that they did not visit him in prison and did not take care of the hungry. Then, Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of them you have done it unto me."

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(Matt 25:40) ""And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"

(Matt 25:45) ""Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'"

When Karen and I were teaching our children about repentance, we taught them to go to the one that they sinned against and ask for forgiveness. But, we did not stop there. We also taught them to do as David did, and confess the sin before God. Ultimately, our sins are against God. We must confess or acknowledge our sins before God, and **ask for his forgiveness and cleansing**.

David not only asks for cleansing and forgiveness, he asks for restoration. He asks God to put truth in his innermost being. He asks God to make him hear joy and gladness again. He asks God to give him a steadfast spirit. He asks God to restore his fellowship with Him. He says, "do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take the Holy Spirit from me." David understood that our sins separate us and break our fellowship with God.

(Psalms 51:5-12) "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. {6} Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom. {7} Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. {8} Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. {9} Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. {10} Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. {11} Do not cast me away from Thy presence, And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. {12} Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit."

In John 1:9, we are given a promise about forgiveness and cleansing. John says that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is a wonderful promise. That is what David was asking God to do. He acknowledged, agreed, or confessed his sins before God, and asked for forgiveness and cleansing.

(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Scripture tells us several times in several ways that God forgives us. Isaiah says that though our sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow. David says in Psalms 103 that "as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." **God removes our sins completely**. These are wonderful promises of His faithfulness and mercy to forgive us.

(Isaiah 1:18) ""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."

(Psalms 103:12) "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us."

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The context of this promise in 1 John about forgiveness and cleansing is fellowship with God. John had just finished saying that “if we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness we lie and do not practice the truth.” Walking in darkness simply means walking in sin. **Sin affects our fellowship with God.**

(1 John 1:6) "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

God is a holy God. He is light, and there is no darkness in Him. Notice what John says about God in verse five. “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Sin or darkness cannot be in His presence. We must be forgiven and cleansed from our sins to have fellowship with the Lord.

(1 John 1:5) "And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

In Psalms 66:18, the psalmist writes, “if I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” God sees and hears everything. He knows the thoughts of our mind before we even say them. He hears everything. What the psalmist is saying is that the Lord will not take action or be moved to action by our prayers when we are regarding or holding on to iniquity in our hearts. Our fellowship with God is broken, and it needs to be restored.

(Psalms 66:18) "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;"

(Psalms 139:4) "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all."

If we know that God sees and knows our sins, and that He offers forgiveness and cleansing from our sins, why is it that we do not quickly run to God when we have sinned? In Psalms 32, David writes how blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is covered. If we know that we will be happy and blessed if we have our sins forgiven, why is it that we hide and run from our sins?

(Psalms 32:1-2) "(A Psalm of David. A Maskil.) How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! {2} How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!"

David goes on to write that when he kept silent about his sin, his body wasted away. He felt a heaviness and a weight; it was the burden of sin. His strength, vitality, and energy was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. **There are consequences when we keep silent about our sin.**

(Psalms 32:3-4) "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. {4} For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah."

David is not the only one to keep silent about sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they tried to hide from God. **Our natural tendency is to hide from God or cover up.** We try and get Uriah to sleep with his wife and cover up our sins. We put Uriah the Hittite to death to

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cover up our sins. We rationalize our sins, and compare our sins with the sins of others, and we think that God grades on a curve. We forget that God is a holy God and that there is no darkness before God.

Sometimes our hearts get hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We enjoy our sin, and don't want to stop sinning. We think that sin is fun, and are deceived by it. As we put off repentance, we are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Because of this, we need to encourage one another in our walks. We need to encourage one another to live a holy life. We need to encourage one another to acknowledge and confess our sins before the Lord.

(Hebrews 3:13) "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

David goes on to say that he acknowledged his sin to God, and he stopped trying to hide his sin. He confesses his transgressions to the Lord, and the Lord forgave him of the guilt of his sin. David sees the blessing of having his sins covered and his transgressions forgiven. Therefore, he encourages everyone to pray to God while He can be found. He says that surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him. When the judgment of God happens, it is too late. When God closed the doors of the ark, it was too late for people to come into the ark. When we sin, we need to pray right now and ask God to forgive us.

(Psalms 32:5-6) "I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah. {6} Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him."

David goes on to say, "do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you." God wants us to come freely to Him to acknowledge and confess our sins. He does not want to put a heavy hand on us. He does not want to use consequences in our lives to get our attention. He does not want to corner us in a tight place so that we have to cry out to him. He does not want to let His people go into captivity so that we cry out to Him. He does not want to use bits and bridles in our lives. God does not want us to be stubborn like a horse or mule which have no understanding. God wants us to have understanding about His forgiveness and mercy. **God encourages us to come to him voluntarily.**

(Psa 32:9) "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you."

David says that "many are the sorrows of the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him." He encourages the righteous to be glad in the Lord and rejoice. He encourages us to shout for joy, all who are upright in heart. People who have their sins and transgressions forgiven are happy, blessed, and joyful. **God wants His people to be blessed and full of joy.**

(Psa 32:10-11) "Many are the sorrows of the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. {11} Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones, And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."

2. Forgiveness from Others

The second area of forgiveness is obtained by going to the one we have sinned against. When we do not mend the relationship that has been breached with sin, unforgiveness and bitterness can set in. Solomon says that a “brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle.” When we offend our brother by sinning against him, he can become like a fortified city. **Offenses are like bars of a castle.** It can be difficult to win our brother back.

(Proverbs 18:19) "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle."

The author of Hebrews exhorts us to see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; and that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. When we offend people and do not reconcile the relationship, bitterness sets in. When a root of bitterness sets in, it is very difficult to save the relationship. In fact, when a person gets bitter, they tell others and many people are affected and defiled by the bitter person. **Roots of bitterness cause many to be defiled.** We are not to let it get to this stage.

(Hebrews 12:15) "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;"

I have found that the sooner that I go to my brother the less infection begins to set in. The sooner that I can go to my brother the less time there is for the bars of the castle to be built. There is an essence of time.

In addition to the other person becoming bitter, there are things in my own life that are troubled. We saw in Psalms 32 that when David kept silent about his sin, his body wasted away, and he felt heaviness. His strength was drained away. In addition to this, I find there is a lack of peace. I am troubled in spirit. The only way to rectify the situation is to make amends with the person that I have sinned against. **We should pay attention to the warning signs of sin.**

(Psalms 32:3-4) "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. {4} For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah."

I have found that my own walk with the Lord is less hindered. For me, it is a necessary principle. We must acknowledge and confess our sins to them. We need to ask them to forgive us for our sins. We should be specific and not general. No one appreciates it when we gloss over our wrongs. It is as if we are not sincere about our repentance.

How do we recognize when we have sinned against someone? What are some signs that we have offended our brother. Here are some of the things that I have found in my own life.

- **Strained communication and relationship** – Many people cut off the communication. You get silent treatment. This is not the way to handle the problem, but it is how some people react. Some people will simply avoid you. It is not just avoiding conversation, they avoid being around you.

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- **Coldness and indifference** – This is similar to the first two, strained communication and relationship, but when you are around the person there is a coldness. There is no warmth in the relationship. One year, a lady in our church became very cold and indifferent around me. I sensed the coldness so I asked her if I had offended her. She replied, yes. She said that she had been at our house one morning while I was eating breakfast, and had asked me about the worship. This was an important thing to her. I had kiddingly said to her, “Please, I am eating right now.” What I meant was that it was so bad that week that I did not want to ruin my breakfast by talking about it. She felt that I had rebuked her at the table in front of everyone, which was not the case at all. I humbly asked her forgiveness for miscommunicating and offending her.
- **Aggressive behavior** – Some people begin attacking you and arguing with you about everything. On the PGA Tour, there was a Christian man that was active in the Bible Study who argued with me about everything. It did not matter what I said, he would contradict it. I was too young in the Lord at that time to recognize the problem. Years later I asked him why he argued with me, and found out that I had made a comment that had offended him. This young man was an All-American Golfer in college. I had made the comment that not every All-American golfer became a star on the PGA Tour. My statement was based on research that I had done. It took the average All-American seven years to even get on the PGA Tour, and many of them never made it onto the PGA Tour. My statement was accurate, but it had offended him. He probably took it personally and thought that I was saying that he would not make it, which was not the case at all.
- **Defensive behavior** – Some people get very defensive when they have been offended. In the same way that people get aggressive, these people take up defensive positions.
- **Easily offended** – Once people are offended, they are more prone to being offended. They take things out of context. If there is a possible way to misinterpret what was said, and take everything for its worst possible interpretation, they will do it.

It would be nice if people would tell us when we have offended them. However, most people will not do that. Most people do not handle things properly and become offended. I tell people that it is very difficult for them to offend me. When people do wrong things to me, I simply forgive them. Whether they come to me or not is not going to matter; they have already been forgiven.

I have found that if we sense any of the above symptoms, we need to take the initiative and go to them. We need to be intentional. We need to be persistent. Even if what we have done or said is not wrong, we need to go to them because we could have offended them. Ask them if we have offended them. Ask them if we have done or said something that hurt them. Most people will tell you if they detect that you are sincere.

If we have offended them, we must confess our sin, ask for forgiveness, forsake the sin, and if restitution is needed, make restitution. When we are going to our brother to ask forgiveness, here are some practical things to keep in mind.

- A. **Speak privately.** Ask the person, “Can I talk to you privately about something that I did which was wrong. I want to make our relationship right.” We can take the other person off the defense

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by letting them know up front that it was our sin. Speaking publicly again can reduce the sincerity. There is a time for open rebuke and open confession, but in individual matters, they need to be dealt with privately. Matthew 18:15

(Mat 18:15) ""And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."

- B. Speak visibly.** Look the person in the eyes. We may feel like cowering or hiding under the table, but we must be courageous and look the person in the eyes. He will see us; we will see him. Eye contact speaks reveals honesty, sincerity, respect and things being above board.
- C. Speak clearly.** Don't mumble. Carefully articulate your confession and your plea for forgiveness. Mumbling your words will hide or diminish what you have to say.
- D. Speak slowly.** Don't rush your words. This is not the time to set the world record for the 440 relay. Rushing through the matter only diminishes what you are trying to do. Give it the proper time which shows that it is important to you.
- E. Speak soberly.** Don't smile or laugh while bringing up the matter. When we smile while we confess our sins, it communicates insincerity. It says we are laughing at the whole matter and that it is not serious. We must convey how serious we are about our sin.
- F. Speak responsibly.** Make no excuses and accept the responsibility for our sins.. "This was entirely my fault." When you blame shift like Adam did, it does not show responsibility and sincerity. (See Luke 18:10-14.)

Genesis 3:12 "And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.""

- G. Speak singularly.** Keep the focus on your particular sin. Do not include the sins of others or of the person you are speaking to. When you bring up the sins of others, it gives the appearance of justifying your actions. We want to accept the full weight and responsibility of our sins, not justify and diminish the impact of our sins. By bringing up other people, you are saying that you are no different than anyone else. It is really not that bad of a thing. Bringing up others makes it look like we are rationalizing our actions. We need to deal singularly with our sin at this time. Proverbs 25:9

(Prov 25:9) "Argue your case with your neighbor, And do not reveal the secret of another,"

- H. Speak lovingly.** Love will bond us back together with the offended party. It will seal the work of repentance that has been done. Verbally express love and commitment to the person. "I love and appreciate you. I value you and our relationship." We should give a warm, enthusiastic hug afterwards. Love will cover a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

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Proverbs 10:12 "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions."

Proverbs 17:9 "He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends."

3. Forgiveness for others

The third area of forgiveness is when others sin against us. When Jesus is teaching the disciples how to pray in Matthew 6, He tells them to pray in this manner. "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." **We must forgive in the same way that we have been forgiven.**

(Matt 6:12) "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

We must forgive our brothers, no matter how often they sin against us. Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18 about how many times he had to forgive his brother when he sinned against him. The Lord tells him that he must forgive him seventy times seven which means unlimited. **We must forgive our brother an unlimited number of times.**

(Matt 18:21-22) "Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said^ to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Jesus goes on to give an account of an unrighteous steward who got forgiveness but did not in turn forgive those who owed him debts. The master heard about it and turned him over to the torturers. Many people are tortured because their septic lines are clogged up. We open ourselves up to the demonic realm when we harbor bitterness and unforgiveness towards our brothers. **A lack of forgiveness brings bondage and torture to us.**

(Matt 18:32-35) "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. {33} 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' {34} "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35} "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.'"

When we forgive others, it is important to release them from that sin. We are not to keep that sin in the closet, ready to remind them of it the next time they do something. We must forgive and forget it. We saw that Jesus removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. We must forgive in the same way. **Once a sin has been dealt with, it should not be mentioned again.**

The Scriptures say that "he who repeats a matters separates intimate friends." Husbands and wives, this is an important principle. Don't keep bringing up old matters that have been dealt with. If they are not dealt with properly, readdress the issue with the person. Discuss and deal with an issue thoroughly and with complete resolve. Then, once it has been dealt with, move on, and do not continue to use it against your spouse. Don't hold it over their head. Don't repeat the matter. Forgive and remove the sin as far as the east is from the west.

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Proverbs 17:9 "He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends."

When people come to us and ask for forgiveness, here are four practical things to keep in mind.

- A. Respond humbly.** Do not act self righteous and like someone who has never sinned. You could mention a similar situation when you also sinned in this area. When you respond in humility, it endears the other person to you. It helps mend and bond the two of you.
- B. Respond quickly.** We need to be quick to forgive. The sooner they can release this burden from their life, the better. We need to quickly forgive them. A quick response shows our intention to walk with them.
- C. Respond graciously.** Thank the person for coming to you and asking for forgiveness. Tell them that it was a big thing that they did, and that not everyone will do this. Tell them that you appreciate them doing this. Make them feel good about what they have done, not the sin, but the asking of forgiveness.
- D. Respond responsibly.** There are two ways to respond responsibly. First, many times there are things that we have done to contribute to the situation. If there are things that you have done which contributed to this, ask forgiveness for your part of the matter. Second, ask if there is anything that you can do to help restore the person. They may want you to keep them accountable. They may want you to pray with them. They may ask for advice in how to handle the situation in the future. Give them a Scripture or practical advice. Be committed to the restoration of the person.

4. Forgiveness for self

The fourth area of forgiveness is forgiveness for ourselves. Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. We have a high expectation for ourselves and we are surprised by our sin. It reveals a proud heart. If we are like Paul and believe that we are the foremost of sinners, it is not hard to recognize that we sin and to forgive ourselves.

1 Tim 1:15 "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

People will beat themselves up over and over again for something that they did years ago. I find that there are several things that are important in walking in forgiveness.

- A. Forsake the sin.** If we have truly repented, we should forsake the sin. Repentance means to do an about face. It means that we were going one direction, but have turned around and are going the opposite direction. If we continue to do the same sins over and over, we have not really repented. We will have a difficult time experiencing forgiveness and cleansing. We must forsake our sin.
- B. Renew our mind.** It is important for us to see ourselves and the situation from God's perspective. God has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Is that how we see our

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sins, or do we still see our sins right beside us or on top of us? Memorize 1 John 1:9 about how God forgives and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Memorize Isaiah 1:18 about how God makes our scarlet sins white as snow. Memorize Psalms 103:12 about how God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. Memorize Scriptures that tell us who we are in Christ. We are saints or holy ones (Eph 1:1). We are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21). We are the beloved or loved ones of God and our hearts should not condemn ourselves (1 John 3:21). All of these promises have been given to us so that we can renew our minds. We need to think God's thoughts, and we need to see ourselves as God sees us.

- C. Stand on His promises.** God says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. God does not condemn us. Therefore, we should not condemn ourselves. We need to stand on His promise that He has forgiven us and does not condemn us.

(Romans 8:1-2) "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

- D. Stay in fellowship.** Luke commends us in Acts 20:32 to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build us up. When we fellowship with the Lord, He encourages us. He is the lifter of our heads. He builds us up with His word. In addition to fellowshiping with the Lord, we must stay in fellowship with other believers. One of the purposes of the assembling of ourselves is for encouragement. We are to consider how to encourage one another. If we forsake the assembling of ourselves, then we miss out on encouragement. And, in particular, find people in the body, or in your Life Group that encourage you.

(Acts 20:32) ""And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

(Hebrews 10:24-25) "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."

Conclusion

God wants you and I to walk in freedom. He wants to remove the burden of sin off of us. He is not just willing to forgive us, He tells us not to be as the horse or mule who need a bit or bridle to get them to come to Him. He wants and encourages us to go to Him. He promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He wants to have fellowship with you and I. Our sins are ultimately against God, and we must acknowledge, confess, or agree with God about our sins.

God also wants you and I have to have fellowship with one another. Sometimes I sin against you and I need to confess my sin to you and ask you for forgiveness. Sometimes, you sin against me, and I need to release you from that sin. I need to forgive you. If I do not release you, then I am the one who is held in bondage. For us to live in right relationship with one another, we have to be forgiving of one another.

God wants us to receive forgiveness. When we confess our sins, He forgives. Many of us do not receive the forgiveness that we have asked for and He has given. We beat ourselves up. We must

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receive that forgiveness and walk in freedom.

All of us sin. As Solomon said, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good who does not sin. We must learn to forgive one another of our sins. We must learn to ask for forgiveness.

In the book of 2 Chronicles, God says that if His people who are called by His name will humble themselves and pray, and seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways, then He will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land. We are wanting God to heal the land in the East Mountains. We are wanting God to move mightily. God is willing. Let's do our part.

(2 Chronicles 7:14) "and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Healthy Relationships - Four Types of Forgiveness

Introduction (Eccl 7:20, Rom 3:23, Is 53:6, 2 Cor 5:21, John 3:16)

1. Forgiveness from God.(Ps 51:1-3

- All of our sins are ultimately _____ . (Psa 51:4, Matt 25:40, 45)
- We should ask for forgiveness and _____ . (Psa 51:5-12, 1 Jn 1:9)
- God removes our sins _____ . (Psa 103:12, Isa 1:18)
- Sin affects our _____ with God. (1 Jn 1:5-6, Psa 66:18, 139:4)
- There are consequences when we keep _____ about our sin. (Psa 32:1-4)
- The natural tendency is to _____ or cover up. (Psa 32:5-6, Heb 3:13, Gen 3:8-10)
- God encourages us to _____ to Him voluntarily. (Psa 32:9)
- God wants His people blessed and full of _____. (Ps 32:1, 10-11)

2. Forgiveness from Others

- Offenses are like _____ of a castle. (Pr 18:19)
- _____ of bitterness cause many to be defiled. (Heb 12:15)
- We should pay attention to the _____ signs of sin. (Psa 32:3-4)

Warning signs that we have offended others include:

- Strained _____ and _____
- _____ and indifference
- _____ behavior
- _____ behavior
- Being _____ offended

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Practical things to keep in mind when asking for forgiveness

- A. Speak _____ . (Mat 18:15)
- B. Speak _____ .
- C. Speak _____ .
- D. Speak _____ .
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- F. Speak _____ . (Gen 3:12)
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- H. Speak _____ . (1 Pet 4:8, Pro 10:12, 17:9)

3. Forgiveness for others

- We are to forgive in the same way that we have been _____ . (Matt 6:12)
- We are to forgive our brother an _____ number of times. (Matt 18:21-22)
- A lack of forgiveness brings _____ . (Matt 18:32-35)
- Once a sin has been dealt with, it should not be _____ again. (Pr 17:9)

Four Practical Responses To Requests For Forgiveness

- A. Respond _____ .
- B. Respond _____ .
- C. Respond _____ .
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4. Forgiveness for self (1 Tim 1:15)

- A. _____ the sin.
- B. _____ our mind. (1 John 1:9, Isa 1:18, Psa 103:12, Eph 1:1, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 John 3:21)
- C. _____ on His promises. (Rom 8:1-2)
- D. Stay in _____ . (Acts 20:32, Heb 10:24-25)

Conclusion: (2 Chron 7:14)

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