

FORGIVENESS PLUS FAITH BRINGS FREEDOM!

Forgiveness is one of God's most difficult commandments, but one of the most freeing if we are obedient to step out in faith, trust Him and do it! Yes, it goes against everything within us to "let go" and to release the person who has hurt us; yet, it is only through forgiveness that we can truly be free and move into the future that the God has prepared for us. It boils down to this: *Forgive and move on! OR Don't forgive and stay stuck!* IT IS A CHOICE!

Why is it so hard to forgive? Why do I forgive the person who has hurt me one minute and the next minute I'm bitter again? Why does the pain of betrayal return—looming over me larger than before—why? Why must I forgive—why can't I just forget it—it's my past! Why can't I live in the pain the way I choose? Why am I such an angry person? Why can't I let people get close to me? Why? Why? Why?

These are only a few of the questions we ask ourselves and in reality, we know the answer—God's answer. Forgiveness is God's gift to us and it is a gift that will set us free and allow us to move on. But, we must be willing to forgive others. It is a gift that when shared can move you and the offender into the very presence of God and change your lives forever.

Forgiving those men who misused me as a small child was one of the hardest tasks I have ever been asked to do after I became a believer. The betrayals—hurts ran deep. The ugly scars had been there too long. I didn't think they could ever be removed—they were daily reminders of the abuse. It didn't compute in my mind that holding onto the painful reminders of the abuse also kept me tied to the offenders. God showed me that I needed to "let go" to become free of them. The lies, pain and unhealthy boundaries that I had learned as a survivor were destroying me. True happiness was always just out of reach. Then God comes along and says, "*Child, forgive them!*"

It took 15 months of intense counseling, therapy, training in the Word and unconditional love to break me through—but breakthrough I did. Their offense was great, but God's forgiveness was greater. God's truth and healing took place in my heart and it finally all fell into place as God intended. The end result was worth the pain of healing for I could see the old habits falling away while the "good" things of God were taking their place. Once I understood the Father's plans for my life, it became easier to put them into place—"to let go"—to forgive—to move on.

Matthew 6:14-15 I read almost every day; it helped me focus on what I needed to do. *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.* You can't say it any clearer than that! I believed that if God said I must do it, then He would give me the ability and help I needed to do it.

No sin hid away in our hearts is too great for us to forgive and let go of, and if we do not release them, they will haunt us for the rest of our lives. Anything relating to that person will be a reminder and continue to cause us pain, until we release them, forgive them and “Let go!”

Abuse in the life of a child doesn't end there. Sin builds upon itself unless checked and stopped. Left to its own devices, sin builds from a molehill into a gigantic mountain as lies, deception, manipulation, slander, anger, hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, and the list goes on and on is formed. You see no way off the mountain—you feel stuck!

Betrayal, rejection, lies, and deception are often wrapped up together in an attractive looking package which we innocently (or foolishly) open; we are unaware of Satan's deadly intent to steal, kill and destroy until it's too late! The mountain continues building as a response to unresolved anger and hurt, or disappointment one feels toward another is not dealt with in a positive way. If we do not give that offense to God in surrendered prayer, it become a poison that saturates our very being—often spewing out upon others.

Isn't it interesting how Satan works? He tries to make you feel that if you forgive the offender, you will lose out in the long run? They will be okay, but you won't. What a deception he plays on us and so many of us buy into his lies. We think that if we forgive the offender, then we have “Okayed” what was done to us; nothing could be further from the truth! Therefore, we purpose in our hearts that forgiveness is not going to happen—that person must pay for what he did. We put a chain around the offenses, paddock it and throw away the key—choosing not to forgive—ever! Satan is happy when we stay stuck! The vicious cycle continues until we finally hear God say, ENOUGH CHILD! GIVE THE OFFENSE TO ME. I WILL TAKE IT! I WANT YOU FREE, AND YOU OBEY!

You can read book after book on forgiveness. Hear story after story on forgiveness. See movies, videos, listen to teaching cassettes and etc., and they are all good in their own rights, but it all comes down to one thing; forgiveness is necessary. Colossians 3:13, *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* God wants you to be free from the offense(s)—He wants you to move on and fulfill your destiny. He has laid out His plans for your life, and is calling you to walk upon His paths. He desires that you receive all the blessings and joys He has stored up for you.

Jesus went through this forgiveness process when upon the Cross, He cried out to the Father, *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing* (Luke 23:34). He was dying. He endured their mocking and torture, yet, He set an example of forgiveness for all believers. Forgiveness will never be an easy thing to do, but it is necessary. It is what Jesus asks each of His children to do. True freedom comes

in forgiving those who have hurt you. True freedom brings a cleaning of the heart. True freedom brings the ability to make wise choices!

God calls His people to a higher realm, where we dwell on the things that are above. You are His child; your destiny is in Him. To walk in your destiny, you must let your faith increase and believe God's Word. He will lead you through the forest of darkness into His marvelous light. Choose to walk out of the pain. Choose to forgive. Choose to be set free; He walks with you! I look back from time to time and I am amazed at how far I have come. How different my life is now. Peace, joy and happiness are no longer beyond my reach; they flow into my life daily.

When you are partners with the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—you have a winning combination, and your life will change. Nothing is impossible in God. Allow your faith to help move the mountains and in freedom, walk over the molehill! In Jesus, you are no longer a victim, or a survivor, but you are now an “Overcomer.”

Acts 10:34, ...*In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality* (is no respecter of persons). He desires that everyone hear the gospel and believe. In Christ there are no barriers. As we come into the saving grace of our Lord, the doors of heaven open and our walk into truth that sets free begins.

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