

How to forgive

by Geri McGhee (c)

It is critical that we forgive. This universe operates according to God's well-crafted design, and human relationships are no exception. In order for us to live the abundant life as the Word of God promises us and to experience healing and release from devastating relationships and circumstances, we must practice the principle of forgiveness.

Someone has said, "Unforgiveness is the act of drinking poison and hoping that someone else dies." Another wise person said, "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it." George Herbert, an American poet and believer said, "He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven." In MAT 6:14 Jesus said it all when He said, *"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."*

Most people do not recognize the importance of forgiveness even though they are acutely aware of their struggles and are actively searching for answers on their own. Forgiveness is the key to the doorway of healing and freedom. Forgiveness builds a sturdy bridge over which repentance and reconciliation can pass. "To forgive is to set a prisoner free - and you will discover the prisoner was YOU."

In MAT 18:35 Jesus said, we are to "forgive from our heart." If you still want to preach to a person, you have not forgiven them. If you do not feel the same about the person who has hurt you than you felt about them before they hurt you, you have not forgiven them. A good test of whether or not you have genuinely forgiven a person from the heart is that when you think of them, there are no negative thoughts or reactions.

Have you ever, like me, had a genuine desire to forgive a person and have said all the right words, "I forgive so and so for whatever the offense against me was", only to discover moments later or days and

weeks later that you were carrying on an argument with them in your head?

One day, I had a disagreement with a woman during a lunch conversation. Before we departed from the restaurant, she asked me to forgive her and I asked her to forgive me, but the next day I was tormented by thoughts of her. I said to the Lord, "Lord, she said she was sorry and I said I was sorry too, why can't I get over this?" The Lord replied, "She is reminding you of unresolved conflicts you have with your mother." I said, "Well Lord, I don't know what to forgive my mother for." The Lord said, "Forgive your mother for everything that is bothering you about her." In obedience to the Lord, I began to forgive my mother for everything I disliked about this woman. As soon as I did this, I could forgive and the issue with this woman was resolved as my heart was healed.

Jesus said in Matthew, we must forgive from the heart. Forgiving from the heart requires that we go back to the doorway: unresolved childhood issues. In my case, my "mother" issues were judgments I had made on my own mother and this woman was mirroring what God wanted to change in me.

When someone is hurtful toward you and you can quickly forgive them, it is not an issue of the heart; but, when the hurt and tormenting thoughts continue, it is a heart issue that is rooted in an unresolved childhood issue where you made an unconscious or conscious vow to do or to not do certain things. When we make these promises to ourselves, we are really turning to false gods to protect our hearts instead of turning to the true and living God who is the healer of our hearts. You may say or think, "When I grow up, I will find someone who will never hurt me, abandon me, control me, reject me, ignore me and who will love me perfectly, value me, listen to me...etc." Or you may also say, "I will never be like my mom or dad or have a home or marriage like my mom and dad ...etc.".

These vows because they are rooted in idolatry will keep us wounded and will set us up for a continual life-long reaping of hurt. The good news is that when we go back to the heart of the issue and forgive

our parents for past hurts, healing will come to us in the present.
Hallelujah!