

Sin of Unforgiveness

“Harboring unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping your enemy will die.” Joyce Meyer

This observation is especially true when we consider why people, including Christians have such a hard time forgiving.

One of the reasons people have a difficult time forgiving themselves is rooted in feelings of shame and guilt. When individuals make mistakes or fall short of their own expectations or cultural standards, they often struggle with feelings of unworthiness.

From a Christian perspective, the issue of self-forgiveness is compounded by the belief in the seriousness of sin and the need for repentance. Many who intellectually acknowledge the biblical truth of repent and be forgiven, still struggle to accept God's forgiveness and move past their transgressions.

The inability to forgive oneself can stem from a distorted view of God's character and grace. Some individuals may see God as harsh and judgmental, leading them to believe that they are not deserving of His forgiveness. This skewed perception can prevent individuals from extending the same grace and mercy to themselves that God freely offers.

Individuals who struggle to forgive themselves may experience feelings of self-loathing, self-doubt, and self-punishment. They may dwell on past mistakes, replaying them in their minds and tormenting themselves with what-ifs and regrets. This constant self-criticism can erode self-esteem and lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Could of, would of, should of thinking may help evaluate the past, but dwelling on such thinking is not helpful for living in the present.

Holding onto unforgiveness towards oneself can have a detrimental impact on mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Studies have shown that individuals who struggle with self-forgiveness are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

Unforgiveness can also manifest in how individuals treat others around them. Some examples: When individuals struggle to forgive themselves, they may project their insecurities and self-criticism onto others. This can lead to a judgmental and critical attitude towards others hoping to deflect attention from their own shortcomings and mistakes.

Unforgiveness can create a barrier that hinders individuals from empathizing with the struggles and challenges of others. Consumed by their own self-condemnation, they may find it difficult to extend compassion and understanding to those around them.

Holding onto unforgiveness towards oneself can lead to a need for control in relationships. Individuals may become overly controlling and manipulative to mask their own feelings of inadequacy and guilt.

Unforgiveness towards oneself can fuel feelings of anger and resentment towards others. Individuals may project their inner turmoil onto those around them, leading to conflict and strained relationships.

Individuals who struggle to forgive themselves struggle to trust others. They see themselves as not

trustworthy and unworthy of being trusted. Individuals who are not trustworthy seldom trust others leading to very dysfunctional, non-productive relationships.

Unforgiveness can manifest in self-sabotaging behaviors that not only harm the individual but also affect their interactions with others. This can include destructive patterns such as lashing out at others including loved ones.

Individuals who harbor unforgiveness towards themselves may find it challenging to accept love and affirmation from others. The belief that they are unworthy of forgiveness can prevent them from receiving love and kindness from those around them.

The answer to overcoming self-forgiveness struggles lies in accepting God's truth and embracing God's grace. God's forgiveness is unconditional and limitless. In 1 John 1:9, it says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is eager to forgive us when we come to Him in humility and repentance.

Another essential aspect of self-forgiveness is understanding that we are not defined by our past. A pastor of a church in Loveland concludes each service with a great truth from Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

May all no longer drink the poison of unforgiveness so prevalent in our society. Instead in John 4:13-14 we read, Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

