

15. Forgiveness (Fact or Feeling)

Perhaps no topic is more immediately relevant to a person being delivered from a life- dominating sin than that of forgiveness. As we look back at the train wreck that we have caused with our sinful behavior, relationships are at the top of the list of things that need to be restored. That restoration begins with forgiveness.

First we must reconcile with God if we are to have a substantial, fruitful relationship with Him. For most of us, we have reached a point where forgiveness seems impossible. We tend to ask the question, “Have I gone too far?” The answer is an emphatic no! As we discover the character of God, we learn that the blood of Christ is sufficient to cover all of our sins. Further, we are not required to earn His forgiveness; it is His gift to us in Jesus Christ. Also it is never required, despite what we may have been taught, to forgive God. The truth is that He didn’t do anything wrong!

Next, we need to forgive others for the wrongs that they have done to us and seek forgiveness from those whom we have harmed. This may seem at first to be a formidable task. But with God’s grace and an accurate knowledge of the meaning of forgiveness, it becomes possible. Not only that, we need to put closure on the past in order to move forward with our future. This may include making reconciliation with those to whom it is due and writing letters to those with whom we have lost contact.

Another incorrect perception that needs to be eliminated is the concept of forgiving ourselves. While we may feel bad for what we have done, there is no scriptural basis for forgiving ourselves. If we think that we need to do that, we are in effect saying that Christ’s blood was not sufficient.

All of that being said, we need a qualified spiritual counselor to walk us through this process in our own lives. Each situation is unique and requires prayer and guidance from God’s Holy Spirit, along with our courage and honesty. We can be sure that God’s grace is sufficient, and we will be blessed as we bring ourselves into harmony with His perfect plan for our lives.

15. Forgiveness

Meditation Passage for the week - Matthew 18:21-35

Forgiveness: The act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty. The forgiveness of enemies is a Christian duty. (Webster's Dictionary)

1. Our Need is to be forgiven by **God**, not **ourselves** (**Acts 26:17-18**)
 - A. Before spiritual new birth our primary need was to be forgiven by God, which is a sovereign **work of God** which was in no way **dependent on us** (**Ephesians 2:1-2**)
 - B. Since our spiritual new birth, our eternal inheritance in Christ is **protected** by God and **sealed** by His Holy Spirit. No one can harm us **eternally** (**Romans 8:35, 38-39**)
 - C. Receiving God's forgiveness is not a matter of **feeling** forgiven, but rather of **trusting** God (**Hebrews 11:6**) and His promises (**Romans 5:1-2, 1 John 1:9**)
 - D. Since God says that there is no condemnation (no guilt or lack of forgiveness) in Christ Jesus, it is then **true** regardless of your **feelings** (**Romans 8:1**)
 - E. When God says that He forgives you, there is **nothing** that you can do or need to do to **complete** it

2. Our **responsibility** to God is to **forgive** those who have harmed us in any way (**Colossians 3:12-14, Ephesians 4:32**)
 - A. **Remember** how much God has forgiven you and what it **cost** Him (**Matthew 7:3**)
 - B. **Admit** that you were seriously hurt (**John 8:32**)
 - C. **Deliberately choose** to forgive and give up your right to **get even** (**Romans 12:17-21, Psalm 37:5-9**)
 - D. **Search** for the **real person** behind the evil mask (the caricature that we have created)
 - E. **Desire** that good things would happen to your wrongdoer. (**Matthew 5:43-45**)

3. Forgiveness does not mean that **consequences** will be **removed**
 - A. The ultimate **consequence** for your sin has been **removed**. (**John 3:16**)
 - B. **Trust** will need to be rebuilt
 - C. **Restitution** may need to be made