

Time to Forgive

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children” (Ephesians 4:30-5:1).

I was wrestling all day with what to write. I didn't want to write on this, but I must. Let me start by saying, forgiveness is not optional—it is mandatory. Many believers are suffering because they have not forgiven those who have hurt, offended, or rejected them. I know some that harbor unforgiveness over who someone voted for!

Harboring unforgiveness in your heart brings consequences that affect you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. A 2015 Journal of Behavioral Medicine study showed that forgiveness is associated with a whole range of health measures, including medications taken, sleep quality and fatigue. The studies have shown people who walk in forgiveness tend to have better health habits, decreased depression and lower levels of anxiety or anger. In addition, researchers found that forgivingness seemed to protect against stress's negative effects on mental health.

Many have a hard time forgiving our parents, friends, spouses or pastors when they say or do hurtful things in anger. Some hold grudges for years, unable to forget the things people have done to us.

Jesus instructs us to forgive those who have wronged us “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14).

Forgiveness is a decision you make and only you can make the decision to forgive. Forgiveness is not just a thought or a fleeting emotion. It is a deliberate action.

Wikipedia defines forgiveness as: *the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in attitude regarding*

an offense, lets go of negative emotions such as vengefulness and anger, with an increased ability to wish the offender well.

Wish our offender well? Seriously, can you do that?

Scripture describes un-forgiveness as something that can grow and spread to hurt many people. (See Acts 8:23 and Hebrews 12:15.) Jesus instructed His disciples (and us) to forgive again and again, “until seventy times seven” (see Matthew 18:21-22).

Since Jesus is our pattern and example to follow you need to be able to freely say, “Forgive them, Father, they don’t know what they are doing.” This challenges us to a lifestyle of forgiveness that offers us freedom from the consequences of bitterness.

Walking in forgiveness is not easy and is almost impossible to get rid of by your own strength and ability. However, walking in forgiveness aligns you with the truth of His word.

Even when forgiveness looks impossible, it will become a reality when the power of God works through you. You must make sure that forgiving others is part of your life.

Examine your heart and see what you’re holding on to. Be willing to let go by choosing forgiveness.

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