

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is giving up the right to retaliate. Forgiveness is the willingness to have something happen the way it happened. It's not true that you can't forgive something; it's a matter of the will, and you always have a choice. Forgiveness is never dependent on what the other person does or does not do; it is always under our control. Forgiveness is giving up the insistence on being understood...Jesus forgave those who crucified him. This is a radical new way of thinking. For those who accept and practice this discipline, there is a release of energy and a sense of freedom." – Pixie Koestline Hammond

Definition

Forgiveness is typically defined as the process of concluding resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offense, difference or mistake, or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution.

Scripture

Forgiving grievances (Colossians 3:13)

How often should we forgive? (Matthew 18:21-22)

Judging, condemning and forgiving (Luke 6:37)

Forgive and be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-16)

Background Information

One roadblock to forgiveness comes from our desire to hold on and our unwillingness to let go. Pixie Koestline Hammond writes, "to forgive is to give up the right to retaliate. It involves letting go of both planning and then inflicting hurt on someone because they inflicted hurt on you.

"It is giving up the right to determine how something will happen." Forgiveness involves accepting what did happen the exact way it happened. Forgiveness is letting go of what was, so you can have a present and a future. None of us can undo what has happened. It was what it was.

"Forgiveness is giving up the insistence on being understood." Some of us have not let go of our anger because the person has yet to understand what they did or failed to do, has done to us. If you are waiting for the other person to understand it from your perspective, you may die waiting. Forgiveness involves letting go of your insistence that the other person understand where you are coming from and what it meant to you and how you feel about what they did.

The second roadblock to forgiveness comes from our unwillingness to look ourselves square in the eye. In other words, forgiveness starts and ends with you.

For forgiveness does not depend on what the other person does or does not do; it is always under your control.” (Hammond, For Everything There is a Season).

The third roadblock to forgiveness is putting too much stock in feelings.

Forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a choice. Anger is a choice too. It is a choice that can become very costly. It is a choice we can make or a choice we can decide not to make. Resentments, disagreements, and estrangements hurt all parties because they reinforce feelings of separation.

The fourth roadblock to forgiveness is we underestimate how our faith can contribute to our being able to forgive. Sometimes we give ourselves the excuse of not forgiving, by saying we just can't forgive (as if it took some kind of special power). Forgiveness is not about having enough strength to forgive, it is about having the conviction that one should and must forgive.

Practice

1. Name someone you need to forgive. Each day pray this section of the Lord's Prayer with them in mind, till you are able to forgive him or her, "Forgive us our debts, trespasses and sins, as we forgive our debtors, and those who trespass and sin against us." Amen.
2. Life Review: While lying in bed at night begin to review your life. Start at the age you are now and continue back one year at time. Say the ages as you do this, such as 49 and simply see what memories come. When you come to a memory about yourself that does not feel good it is time to proceed with forgiving. Simply allow yourself to clearly receive the image of what the situation was about and begin to forgive yourself for the feelings in the situation. Then see if you can understand how to forgive the other person or people involved. When no more memories come up for that year go down one year to age 48 and so forth. Write down the year you stop with each time and when you do this exercise again start at that age. This is an exercise that may take many nights. Be patient.
3. Practice Forgiveness Every Hour (Try this for a 24 hour period, continue the practice if it proves helpful for you): Can you find at least one thing every hour to forgive? For example: I forgive myself for not eating a healthy breakfast. I forgive the woman at the story for not treating me with respect. I forgive my father for not speaking his gratitude to me for the things I do for him. I forgive the person who cut me off in traffic.
4. Make a list of people you need to ask for forgiveness. Pray about being able to ask them for forgiveness. Then, ask them to forgive you. Know that you

cannot control their answer on whether they forgive you or not. Rest in the fact and receive peace from knowing you did what God asked you to do.

5. Determine to forgive someone who has hurt you. Pray about setting a date and time when you will do this. Then, on that date and time forgive them. You may want to do a small ritual at that time – like kicking the dust off your feet, washing your hands, opening your fists in an action of release or one of your own design and choosing.

Resources

Learning to Forgive by Doris Donnelly