

Why Should I Forgive?

By Harold Graham, Chaplain

The issue to forgive or not forgive is huge in our culture. People hurt each other continually. The very basic tenets of our culture dictate that we have the rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” When what we perceive to be limitations to our liberties or our happiness occur, it seems that it is our civic duty to hold someone accountable. It “feels” good to not forgive, at least in the early stages of grudge holding. But the price tags are high.

Studies now are indicating that when we do not forgive great damage is done to ourselves. Our physical health is compromised and at times severely. Our mental health is damaged as we dwell on past offenses and our emotional energies are spent on a pattern of a continual revisiting of the hurtful situation. The person who hurt us consumes a much larger part of our thoughts than they deserve. One question to ask ourselves is, “How much time each day is spent in thinking and feeling about this person and situation?” Would we like to have at least part of this time be made available to spend on good and productive endeavors?

There is another damage to consider that is the damage that is done to our other relationships because of our anger, resentment and at times depression that come out at the smallest provocation. It is almost like saying, “Love me, love my baggage!” Intense negative emotions damage our marriages, parenting, friendships, work relationships and social interactions in general. Little does the unforgiving person realize the damage done to others. We see sarcasm, criticism, rage, violence, transferred anger, bitterness, etc. drive the ones who we love and who love us away. The old saying is true, “Wounded people, wound people.”

Lastly there is the fact that this so often becomes a whole new way of life, a life that is of an intensely negative flavor. Proverbs 24: 17, 18 in the Amplified Bible states, “Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles or is overthrown, Lest the Lord see it and it be evil in His eyes *and* displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him, (to expend it on you, the worst offender.) So does this mean that God’s wrath is prevented from falling on that person who hurt us so badly? Ask another question, “Just who is hurting the most in this anyway?” The answer is I am, not the other person. Our own misery seldom, if at all, convicts anyone of anything. If God really wants to “punch the other guy in the nose” duck, and get out of His way. The only way to do this is to forgive from your heart those who have hurt you. May God bless you.

Other Resources:

- *Forgiving as We Have Been Forgiven; Community Practices for Making Peace* by L. Gregory Jones

- *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* by Miroslav Volf
- *Forgiveness: Breaking the Power of the Past* by Kay Arthur, David Lawson and B.J. Lawson
- *The Five Languages of Apology: How to Experience in All Your Relationships* by Gary Chapman
- *Forgiveness: Breaking the Power of the Past* by Kay Arthur
- *Forgiveness, the Ultimate Miracle* by Paul J. Meyer