

You Can Find Freedom through Forgiveness

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People hurt us deeply with their indifference, criticism and abuse. Sometimes it is unintentional, but often we know it is very intentional and often it is repeated over and over and over again. We respond with shame, hurt, and bitterness. Sometimes we lash out angrily; more often we withdraw with our pain and anguish.

Bitterness is like poison that makes us question ourselves and all our relationships. We wonder about God, our protector (Ps 32:7), who by all appearances has not protected us. Can He be trusted? Can anyone be trusted? So we build walls of safety or self-protective vows, "I will never let anyone hurt me like that again." Even our bodies respond to chronic bitterness with chronic tension, stress and illness. We question ourselves, "Am I worthy? Am I lovable?" Over time chronic bitterness can contribute to low self-esteem, depression and angst. With all this strife and anguish it seems like there is no way out.

The Bible warns us not to be caught in bitterness because it gives the devil a foothold (Eph4:26, 27). Doesn't not trusting God and others, illness and angst seem like something the devil would want to instigate?

We are so fortunate because The Bible tells us the way out and Jesus shows us the way out. We are not trapped in an endless mire of bitterness. With the conviction, encouragement, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit You Can Find Freedom Through Forgiveness.

God so loves us He gave us forgiveness to heal our relationships and ourselves. God must believe forgiveness is very very important because when He tells us to forgive He adds He won't forgive us if we don't forgive others (Matt6:15). No other sin does He say that ... not murder, stealing or infidelity. Jesus taught the importance of repeated offenses 70x7 times (Matt18:22). Jesus also showed us forgiveness when He asked God to forgive tormentors as they crucified Him (Lu23:34).

"Impossible. I can't. You don't understand what they did", you say. I agree. Without the help of God it is unthinkable.

Before we go on to what forgiveness IS we need to mention what it is NOT. Forgiveness does not mean it didn't matter. It did matter or there would be nothing to forgive. Forgiveness does not mean just not think about it. Forcing ourselves not to think about the abuse gives it more power. Forgiveness does not mean deny feelings. Denying bitterness gives it hidden strength. Forgiveness is not a feeling. We may never feel like forgiving, but we can choose to forgive to obey. Forgiveness is not forgetting. We won't forget, but the pain will change. Forgiveness is not trust. Forgiveness is about the past and trust is about the future. Forgiveness does not mean reconciliation. Reconciliation requires change and cooperation of others. Forgiveness can include consequences or punishment. People may be prosecuted and go to jail even if they have been forgiven. Forgiveness can include boundaries. Boundaries for protection from further abuse can take many forms too many to discuss here.

Forgiveness is obediently releasing pain to Jesus Christ so He can replace it with His healing and love.

To forgive we can go to God alone in prayer or we may choose pray with a dear friend or counselor. Set aside an hour or more of uninterrupted time. It helps to write as you pray.

First ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind those people and things they did that need to be forgiven. With each thing recall how it made you feel then and still. Confess if there is any way you sinned with hatred and retaliation. Renounce any self-protective vows to not be hurt again. Forgive God for what appeared to be His failure to protect you. Make a declaration and choice to forgive God and the person in the power, authority and name of Jesus Christ. Do this whole process for each person and event God has brought to mind.

There may need to be more than one time of prayer because of the many people and incidents. Or the enemy may bring to mind the events and stir up bitterness again. When that happens, as soon as possible declare again that you have already chosen to obey God and have forgiven.

In my own life I had experienced death of a parent, abuse, and divorce. Through forgiveness God transformed death to life for Him, bitterness to compassion and hurt to humor. You too can Find Freedom through Forgiveness.

For an example, my testimonies, of forgiveness go to www.walkfreeministries.com/freedom