



Women Building Godly Lives

*The wisest of women builds her own house,
but folly with her own hands tears it down. Prov. 14:1*

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Forgiveness

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Forgiveness

By Wilburta Arrowood

Forgiveness means different things to different people. Generally, however, it involves a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it mean condoning or excusing offenses.

In Matthew 18:21-22 (NASB) we read, Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” Continuing through verse thirty-five Jesus tells of two servants, one forgiven his debt and the other who refused to forgive a fellow slave. The latter servant was condemned, and Jesus says we must be willing to forgive in order to be forgiven. I have heard Christians declare that we do not have to forgive unless the offender repents, because even God demands repentance. I believe this is a dangerous position for two reasons.

First, by example, in Luke 23:34 we read, But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” In a most heinous situation Jesus did not demand those soldiers repent. He asked for their forgiveness. Would he have done so if he were not willing to forgive them?

Second, in Mark 11:25-26 we read, “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.” I believe anything and anyone means just that. However, be aware this is not forgiveness for eternal life. It is forgiveness for offenses against you. When we forgive it frees us. There is an old adage that goes something like, hurt me once, shame on you. Hurt me twice, shame on me. Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or excusing the harm done to you or making up with the person who caused the harm.

Forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. Forgiveness brings a kind of peace that helps you go on with life. Your anger and bitterness toward another does nothing to the offender, but it eats at your heart and can even cause serious physical illness. According to Mayo Clinic, “Letting go of grudges and bitterness can make way for improved health and peace of mind. Forgiveness can lead to:

- Healthier relationships
- Improved mental health
- Less anxiety, stress and hostility
- Lower blood pressure
- Fewer symptoms of depression
- A stronger immune system
- Improved heart health
- Improved self-esteem”

Does this mean we do not have to repent? Absolutely not! When we forgive others it is as much for our well-being as it is for theirs. When God demands repentance from us, again it is for our well-being and it is for our eternal salvation. In Acts 2:38 Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

God does require repentance in order to inherit eternal life, because he cannot tolerate sin. We must be clean and pure when we reach eternity. In order to do that, we must remove sin via the forgiveness found in the blood of Jesus. We forgive earthly wrongs, God forgives eternal wrongs.

We must forgive for our well-being, and we must repent and be forgiven for our well-being. Having done that, we can rest assured God will take care of any of our “unfinished business” in truth and fairness. Let us forgive and be ready.



The Characteristics of a Forgiving Heart

(Matthew 18:21-35)

By Amanda Stephanus

When studying the subject of forgiveness, it is important to make sure we exhibit the appropriate attitude or mindset. I am thankful Jesus addressed this matter, so I can make sure I am forgiving as I ought to be. In Matthew 18:21, Peter asks the Lord how many times he should forgive his brother. After answering the question in verse 22, Jesus gave a parable to show the nature of one’s heart when forgiving.

The first characteristic of a forgiving heart is mentioned in verse 26. A servant who owed ten thousand talents begged his lord to have patience with him while trying to pay the debt. The word “patience” means to be long spirited, to forbear. The servant desired for his lord to not be angry with him while trying to make things right. How many times in our lives have we desired for someone to be patient with us when we’ve done wrong? How many times do we desire for God’s patience? If we want it, we should readily show it.

The second characteristic of a forgiving heart is seen in the following verse. Matthew 18:27 tells us the servant’s lord was moved with compassion. Complete WordStudy defines compassion in the following way: to feel deeply, to yearn, to have pity. In the parable, the lord not only felt compassion towards his servant, but he also acted upon that compassion. There are multiple accounts in scripture where Christ was moved with compassion and acted upon it (Matthew 14:14, Matthew 20:34). When someone comes to us asking for forgiveness, are we moved with compassion? Furthermore, does that compassion prompt us to forgive?

The third characteristic of a forgiving heart is illustrated in verse 33. In the parable, the servant who begged for patience now refuses to have patience with the one who owed him a hundred denarii, which would have been pittance compared to the ten thousand talents he owed his lord. When his fellow servants saw his actions, they went and told their lord what happened. The lord tells the servant he should have had pity, or mercy, on his fellow servant. In the Greek, the word “pity” carries the idea of having an active desire to remove the misfortunes of others. Even though he had experienced pity from his lord, this servant refused to show the same pity for his fellow servant and in the parable was delivered to the tormentors (v.34). God exhibited the ultimate act of pity or mercy when He sacrificed His only Son so I could receive forgiveness of my sins.

As a Christian, my desire is to always have a forgiving heart. To do that, I must be willing to show patience, compassion, and pity on those who desire forgiveness from me.

Works Cited:

Complete WordStudy Dictionary. Computer Software: E-Sword, Version 11.0.6. 2018



What Difference Does It Make?

By Alice Simmons

Many things in life make a difference: decisions, choices, commitments, moves, marriage, children, etc. Each of these things contribute to change. All make a difference in our future. Even in dealing with others, our choices and decisions can make a difference, not only in their life, but also in our own. For instance, when we are wronged by another, we tend to avoid them. The hurt is deep, and perhaps anger sets in. We feel we can never forgive or forget the wrong, but God says we must. "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6: 14) That command is one of the most difficult ones to keep because it hits home so often.

Many times, we find it hard to renew a bond that's been broken. To imagine ever forgiving such an awful wrong is impossible. Some think that "time heals all wounds." Time may heal surface wounds, but deep, broken hurts need care, attention, and compassion. When a friendship is severed for whatever reason, sorrowfulness and forgiveness are the only cure. Those two actions by both parties require humility.

It's a good lesson on humility for both the wrong-doer and the one who's been wronged. Both must find it in their heart to do the right thing that God requires of them. Humility is the support structure of forgiveness. It takes a humble person to admit sin and to ask forgiveness.

Likewise, for the one who been asked to forgive. Forgiving isn't easy. The wrong done may have left a reminder of something that cannot be undone. Yet, God leaves no alternative. When sorrow is spoken, forgiveness must follow.

Being ready to forgive when asked comes when we learn to be patient. God is patiently waiting for us to ask Him to forgive us. Christ's blood was shed for our forgiveness of wrong/sin. We are confident that we will be forgiven no matter what the sin may be, when we repent and turn from it. There is no time that God turns His back on us when we are humbly asking. We ask because we are sorry and repent. He forgives because He loves us and cares for us, and we are to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34-35).

God stated the difference in forgiving and not forgiving others when He told us "But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:15). Forgiveness or lack thereof, will determine where we spend eternity. Let us lovingly, without hesitation, forgive one another.



Forgiving Yourself

By Elizabeth Turner Beall

Many times we have sin(s) in our lives, committed long ago, yet we continue to ask God's forgiveness. How many times do we need to ask forgiveness for sins for which we have truly repented and no longer commit? Only once.

The Bible shows us the following things God does with those forgiven sins:

1. "I, even I, am He who **blots out your transgressions**, for my own sake, and **remembers your sins no more.**" (Isaiah 43:25)
2. God **removes our sins from us "as far as the east is from the west."** (Psalm 103:12)
3. King Hezekiah says to God, "You have **put all my sins behind Your back.**" (Isaiah 38:17)
4. "**You (God) will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.**" (Micah 7:19)
5. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and **whose sins are covered.**" (Romans 4:7)

Because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), we should believe our sins are forgiven the very instant we ask God's forgiveness. Why do we continue to ask? Asking shows we are doubtful of God's promise to forgive. If He has promised to do all the above with our sins, then why are we not moving on and rejoicing in that forgiveness? Because we are human, we still feel pain and shame. We regret what we did and can't let go. But the problem is not with God. It's with us. We must learn to forgive ourselves.

Too many times we carry our own guilt long after God has forgiven and forgotten. Sometimes we need to be hard on ourselves, but those times are not part of this. When we ask God to forgive, then for our own peace of mind, we must be willing to forgive ourselves. And do not wait. Forgive yourself immediately after God's forgiveness.

If you have never done this, you are missing out on one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. It is one of the most freeing things you can do for your heart, mind, and soul. No, it's not easy to do. But, when you learn to forgive yourself, you will be calmer within yourself, and you will have more compassion towards others. The compassion isn't the condoning of sin, but in being less critical and more willing to help and encourage others.

So, how do you forgive yourself? By simply talking to yourself. However, I strongly suggest you look yourself in the eye. There's just something about eye-to-eye contact in the mirror and talking to yourself. Yes, it feels odd, even silly. But, once you really get into the self-conversation, the seriousness takes over. Emotions come into play.

Be specific. Have your forgiveness requests written down. Talk to yourself about them. Tell yourself what you did and why it was wrong. Be honest with yourself. Own your actions, or lack of, and then ask yourself, "do you forgive me, (your name)?" Don't be surprised if you cannot immediately give that forgiveness. At this point that the seriousness of your actions and consequences may hit you in a more objective view, like you were seeing someone else in the mirror. You may even see yourself as others might have seen you.

I, myself, was very surprised that I did not immediately respond with a "yes, of course, Elizabeth, I forgive you." I don't remember how long I stood there, looking at myself eye-to-eye, thinking about what I was asking, reminding myself that God had already forgiven me, and that He loves me and has forgotten all those things. I finally answered, "Yes, Elizabeth, I do forgive you. How can I hold against you what God has forgiven and forgotten?" The tears I had shed before were in shame, but those tears turned to joyful at that point. The load that lifted from me was not visible, but was felt nevertheless. I have never been so free, so calm, and at peace with myself and God.

After the conversation ended, and I was thinking about it, I realized that now there was a certain emptiness that needed to be filled. Like when Jesus cast out demons and something needed to be replaced with good, or the bad would return. I knew the emptiness needed to be filled with God, His word, and doing what I could for Him and the church. Removing that unnecessary load from ourselves allows us to focus more on the positive things we can be doing—knowing more about God and Jesus the Christ, having a deeper hunger for the Word, and see more clearly what needs to be done for others.

Please consider forgiving yourself. Free your mind and heart to enable you to be closer to God.



Questions for consideration and meditation:

1. What are some reasons that may cause one to not forgive?
2. Must we forgive without being asked?
3. How many times do we forgive the repeated wrong-doer, and why?
4. How have you displayed these three characteristics in your own life?
5. Which one do you need to work on the most and how can you do that?

Ideas for applying this topic:

1. Consider who needs your forgiveness and why. Pray about it. Plan how you will do that. Do it.

2. Consider those from whom **you** need to ask forgiveness. Ask their forgiveness for (be specific).
3. Consider your own life. Of all the things God has forgiven you for, have **you** forgiven yourself? Make a list. Go to a mirror, look yourself in the eye, ask forgiveness.

Prayer suggestions:

1. Pray for those you need to forgive.
2. Pray for those from whom **you** need forgiveness. Pray for strength and humility to ask them.
3. Pray for yourself, that you will have courage and strength to face those things for which you need forgiveness of yourself.



Forgiveness puzzle

Instructions: Cross out all words that may be considered a sin or something that would be wrong in God's eyes.(NOTE: Do not cross out the words "sins" and "lawless")

JEALOUSY	GOSSIP	BLESSED	DISOBEDIENCE	HATE
LYING	ARE	ANGER	THOSE	STEALING
WHOSE	COMPLAINING	LAWLESS	RAGE	MURDER
LUST	DEEDS	IMPURITY	ARE	BITTERNESS
FORGIVEN	GAMBLING	ARGUING	PRIDE	AND
WORRY	RACISM	WHOSE	IDOLATRY	GREED
SINS	STINGY	ENVY	ARE	SLANDER
ADULTRY	HATE	COVERED	PRIDE	BLASPHEMY

What do the remaining words say? Write them in order on the lines below.

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