

FORGIVING OTHERS

Follow 2 | principle 11.2



What if you don't forgive?

Read the second part of the story in Matt 18:23-35 again.

Here we see how the servant whose debt has been forgiven meets a friend who owes him hundreds of euros. The servant doesn't want to forgive his friend's debt. When the king hears of this he has the servant arrested. The king hands the servant over to the torturers. This story reflects what happens if you are forgiven yourself and yet don't forgive what others have done to you.

In medical science there are clear links between some sicknesses and not wanting to or being able to forgive others. If you can't or won't forgive then anger, hate and bitterness can form. This can lead to your body becoming sick.

We can become spiritually bound by invisible ties to the person who has caused pain in our lives through painful words, deeds or events. Consciously or subconsciously, you think about this person or event regularly. Sometimes you keep dreaming about it. No one is allowed to know what happened; either that or you talk about it all the time.

What is forgiveness?

Each time that someone intentionally or unintentionally hurts us we get wounded in our heart. This pain expresses itself in:

1. emotional pain, leading to anger and sadness. You become the victim of what the other person has done.
2. wanting revenge: someone owes you something because they have damaged something. Damage may be on an emotional, physical or material level. The culprit has a debt to pay to the victim.

The victim becomes the accuser (someone who demands something from another), the culprit becomes the guilty party (someone guilty of something)

Example 1

Someone drives into my car. There is visible damage. I am also in shock and angry because the other person wasn't paying attention. There is now damage to my car which needs to be repaired. But there is also emotional shock which gives me nightmares at night and I keep thinking of that person.

The damage to the car needs to be repaired and paid for by the other person. The emotional shock requires me to forgive.

Example 2

A child is unfairly beaten throughout his or her childhood. This leads to emotional pain. The right to a loving childhood which each child has is violated. There is talk of a debt which cannot be paid back in money. Punishment was dealt out wrongly and the love which was needed was not given.

Forgiveness is no longer holding the other responsible for the emotional pain inflicted AND giving up your right to repayment; that is forgiving the debt.

Eph 4:32b

There are situations in which you exercise your right to receive compensation for the damage caused. If someone has been physically assaulted they can take the culprit to court for financial compensation.

What if the damage done to you cannot be repaid? God knows that this damage breaks us up inside. Revenge and bitterness can keep a person captive their entire life. God's love will help us. The Holy Spirit can heal our wounds. He is a specialist in healing heart pain. God knows that forgiveness is the way to freedom. In order to become completely free and healed, forgiveness will have to take place. Forgiveness is needed even if the person who owes you something doesn't pay you back for the damage or does not go to prison for it.

Why forgive?

Through forgiving, you yourself become free and you leave your right to judge with God the Father. You don't keep demanding payment because you lay your right to reimbursement down. By doing this you experience inner freedom again in your heart. He gave you the chance to be set free from His judgement and to receive His grace instead of punishment. You have been forgiven. His Son died for your sin. He will also give the same chance to the person who hurt and damaged you. God has given even the greatest sinner the chance to receive His grace and thereby His forgiveness.

A few years ago a friend lost their son through a violent incident. The son was shot dead. The culprit was caught and brought before the judge. Of course, my friend was struggling with anger, sadness and bitterness. In court it was proven that the suspect really was the culprit. He was convicted and was sentenced to prison. Now that his punishment was known, my friend knew the verdict on the killing of his son and what to forgive. He told the judge and the murderer that he forgave the murderer. My friend is still sad at his loss but he is no longer tormented by hate, resentment or bitterness. He is free in his heart.

Reconciliation

When forgiveness takes place it doesn't mean that reconciliation automatically takes place between both parties. Reconciliation must come from both sides. If both parties are willing to give and receive forgiveness then the relationship really can be restored. But that restoration is not a condition to be free from the pain.

Matt 6:14,15

Luke 6:35-38

How do I forgive?

It is important to identify the pain and damage caused.

1. Name the pain and damage. You can write this down.
2. Try to see and understand the situation from the perspective of the other person. Try to look at the person who hurt you through God's eyes. (Have you ever regretted something you have done?)
3. Forgiveness is giving somebody something they don't deserve. It is gracious to forgive another. Actually you are giving the other person a gift they don't deserve.
4. Consider telling the person in question what has caused you pain. Communicate clearly that you have forgiven that person and that they are free from the debt.



EXERCISE:

Tell God that you want to forgive the person and tell Him for what you forgive them. Ask God the Father to heal you from this situation. He can set you free from all pain.

Discuss with your mentor what you have understood from this lesson. Tell them what has come up in your mind or heart. Consider together if it is sensible to undertake action to put things right as part of you forgiving people.

If you want, you can write a 'free of debt' check and stick it in your journal so that you know what day you forgave them.

PRINCIPLE 11

Learning to forgive like Jesus will set us free. Forgiving yourself helps you to be the person God intended. Forgiving others brings the peace of the Kingdom of God into your heart.



Matthew 18:23-35

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or your heart."

Ephesians 4:32

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Matthew 6:14-15

14 For if you forgive other men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Luke 6:35-38

35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."