

Keys to Experiencing the Healing Power of Forgiveness

Week 4: Does Forgiving Require Forgetting?

Bible Basis: The Apostle Paul writes from his prison cell in Rome shortly before his martyrdom to Timothy, his son in the faith (2 Timothy 4:6-18).
The story from Genesis 37-50 shows how Joseph forgives his brothers.

Basic Premise Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that is a result of a wrong done to you. Forgiving someone includes the important step of confessing, “You no longer owe me. I release you from your debt and relinquish my right to avenge myself.”

The Promise of God – God remembers our sins no more!

- In the Old Testament, the Israelites were challenged to remember conditions or circumstances that served as the basis for God’s deliverance (Deuteronomy 6:15).
- God does not forget our sins. **God remembers them no more.** (Isaiah 43:25 and Jeremiah 31:34)
- “Remembering no more” means never bringing that sin against that person again; instead choosing to go on in our life and relationship with the offender without allowing the memory of the offense to dominate.

Dealing with negative memories

- **Recognize that forgiveness does not always make things better.** (2 Timothy 4:6-13)
- **Realize that the memory, if it is perpetuating death and not fostering healing and/or new life is not of God** (see what Paul says about godly sorrow, repentance and its fruits in 2 Corinthians 5:8-11)
- **View others as tools for growth.** What insight into yourself and others have you gained? What lessons have you learned? What part did you play in your response to the situation that does not bear repeating? How have you grown? Remember Joseph’s plea to his brothers: *you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result.* (Genesis 50:19-21)
- **Use that negative memory as a reminder, not of the crime committed** but of the grounds for forgiveness, of God’s grace and God’s own forgiveness shown you.
- **Change the station** – refuse to give your mind permission to replay the tape of the offenses that only prolongs our agony and reinforces negative emotions. **Develop a mantra** based on God’s goodness – God is training me to live God’s holy best; I can’t see it fully yet but God is working all things to my good. **Find a song** that sings of God’s victory and learn to sing it loudly when the tape begins to play.
- **Overcome evil with good.** Ask God to show you the real need in the offender’s life and how God might use you to meet that need. Returning good for evil has the power of recreating new memories.
- **Learn to pray for the ones we have forgiven.**
- **Make past hurts a platform for ministry to other hurting people** (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Action Question

Name three ways in which you have grown through the offenses of others. Write a mantra you will recite or choose a song you will sing when old negative memories try to invade ground won and reclaimed by Christ through forgiveness.

Next Week’s Topic: How to begin again: Rebuilding Trust, Mending Brokenness

Forgiveness becomes possible when we realize vengeance, punishment and retribution cannot satisfy the debt incurred for wrongs we suffer. Read Luke 6:27-36 and Romans 12:9-21. What do these two passages say about beginning again?

Study Resources: *Choosing Forgiveness* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, 2006
The Sacred Art of Forgiveness, Marsha Ford, Skylight Paths Publishing, Woodstock, VT, 2006.
The Gift of Forgiveness, in “The Treasured Works of Charles Stanley”, Inspirational Press, NY, NY, 1991

Scripture and Story Highlights for Session 4: Does Forgiveness Require Forgetting?

2 Timothy 4:6-18

6 As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

9 Do your best to come to me soon, **10** for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, ^{F10} Titus to Dalmatia. **11** Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.

12 I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. **13** When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. **14** Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. **15** You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.

16 At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them!

17 But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Genesis 50:15-26 (the full Joseph story begins in Genesis 37)

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"

16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died:

17 "This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

22 Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father's family. He lived a hundred and ten years

23 and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph's knees. **24** Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." **25** And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place." **26** So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.