

WHEN FORGIVING IS NOT EASY

Some think Christianity sets an impossible standard when it calls on believers to forgive all those who have hurt or injured them. But with God “all things are possible”. There are three main reasons why we may find it difficult to forgive.

First, we do not have a sufficiently deep realisation of how much we ourselves have been forgiven. The sin of another against us is as nothing when compared to our sin against God – yet He has forgiven us.

Second, holding resentment or indignation against another who has hurt us gives us a sense of power and control over them, and when we give it up, we are left feeling somewhat helpless. But it is to helplessness we are called in the words: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Forgiveness involves giving up control and trusting God with the outcome.

A third reason why we may find it hard to forgive is what we might call “misplaced dependency”. This occurs when we erroneously believe that another person’s positive interaction with us is essential to us feeling good about ourselves, and so we move from dependency on God to dependency on others. Then when they hurt us, *because we believe we need them to function*, we feel they have destroyed our souls. This is why we are always hurt most by those who are closest to us. But people cannot destroy us; only God can do that (Matthew 10:28). It is a lot easier to forgive when we see that our *life* is not in people, but in God.

Forgiveness, we must remember, is not so much a feeling but a decision – an action of the will. You *decide* to forgive, whether you feel like it or not. You supply the willingness, God will supply the power.

O Father give me a deeper realisation than ever before of how much I have been forgiven. And forgive me again for preferring control over trust and finding my life in people rather than in You. You have forgiven me. Help me to forgive others. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

SCRIPTURES ON WHICH TO REFLECT

1. Consider the extent of divine forgiveness.

... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103: 12)

2. God – the only Avenger of evil.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay.” Says the Lord. (Romans 12: 19)

3. **What God has done for us we must do for others.**

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3: 13)

4. **Unforgiveness ruins our lives.**

See to it that no-one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12: 15)

5. **Forgiveness – the main message of Christianity.**

... that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5: 19)

6. **Satan is unable to get a foothold among the forgiving.**

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven ... I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2: 10 - 11)

7. **Our refusal to forgive others impedes God's forgiveness of us.**

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11: 25)

8. **Serious consequences follow when we refuse to forgive.**

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18: 35)