A Heart of Forgiveness

When someone causes you offense you need to forgive them. When you feel shame about what you have done, you need to forgive yourself. Having a heart of forgiveness is not always easy but is always necessary.

## Introduction

Over the last few weeks, we have discussed different heart attitudes, thankfulness, encouragement, and repentance. Today we want to conclude our series on heart attitudes with A Heart of Forgiveness.

Forgiveness seems to be an issue that needs to be revisited often. We always seem to be in the position of needing forgiveness or needing to forgive someone else. There are aspects to forgiveness throughout our lives.

## Forgiving Others

As a child when someone said they were sorry you were supposed to respond with “I forgive you.” That is great and simple when the offense is someone taking your piece of candy or jumping in front of you in line, but what if the offense is deep? What if the offense is painful and trust has been broken? Sometimes we can’t just say “I forgive you” and move on.

Jesus has a lot to say about forgiveness. His life emulates forgiveness. The reason God sent his only son, Jesus, to die for us is so that we could receive forgiveness for our sins and be reconciled back to God for eternity.

The Apostle Paul says this to the church in Antioch in Acts 13:38:

### Acts 13:38

(38) "Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

Jesus brings forgiveness to us. His life was the ultimate example of forgiveness.

Paul writes this to the church in Ephesus in Ephesians 1:7

### Ephesians 1:7

(7) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Forgiveness is given to us through God’s grace. Grace is not getting what we deserve, it is receiving blessings that we do not deserve. We are sinful and deserve death which is eternal separation from God. However, we can receive forgiveness and gain eternal life!

If this is the example that God gave us for forgiveness, then that means that we must show grace too. This is where forgiveness is tough. When we are deeply hurt by someone it is hard to show them grace. It is difficult to not treat them how we think they deserve.

We must choose to forgive. We must put our feelings aside and decide to do what is right. Choosing forgiveness will free you from the bondage the other person has over you. This does not mean that your emotions are insignificant or to dismiss them entirely. This means putting forgiveness into practice.

Choose to not hold a grudge. Choose instead to be kind, show love, and work toward reconciliation in accordance with God’s word, the Bible.

Jesus tells us this in Matthew 6:14 right after teaching the disciples the Lord’s Prayer:

### Matthew 6:14

(14) For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

A heart of forgiveness always gives grace and forgives others. This does not excuse poor behavior or dismiss wrongs, but it does create a path to restoration for the individual.

## Seeking Forgiveness

We also need to seek forgiveness sometimes. Last week we spoke about a heart of repentance. We shared that we all make mistakes. None of us are perfect. We will cause wrong, hurt, or offend others throughout our lives. It is often unintentional. You do not mean to hurt or offend others, but it happens. In these times we need to seek their forgiveness.

If we feel that we have hurt someone else with our words or actions, then we need to make a point to seek forgiveness.

Remember that offense is in the heart of the beholder. In other words, you and I could be listening to the same person speak and they could say something that I take offensively but you do not. In any case, if we feel that we have offended someone, then we must do what we can to make it right.

It is often as simple as humbling ourselves and seeking out the person we have offended or wronged and asking for their forgiveness. We should do our best to correct the situation working toward reconciliation. A heart of humility, sincerity, and repentance is necessary when we seek forgiveness.

These are heart issues and when we have allowed Jesus into our hearts and trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will see when we need to seek forgiveness from others. Allow the Holy Spirit to point out where you have wronged others and ask the Lord for the strength and sincerity to seek their forgiveness.

There are no guarantees. No one is required to extend forgiveness to you. Remember, we are forgiven ultimately by grace. Those that do not know the Lord are slow to forgive if they forgive at all. But you should do the right thing, repent, and through sincere humility ask for forgiveness.

There may still be consequences, but forgiveness can be obtained. If the person you grieved does not give you forgiveness, that is okay. You have repented and asked. Now the burden of their unforgiveness rests on them, not on you. You can move forward blameless.

A heart of forgiveness always seeks forgiveness when we know we have wronged someone.

## Forgiving Yourself

Lastly, sometimes the most difficult forgiveness to find is forgiving ourselves.

When we have a hard time grasping who we are in Christ, we have a hard time forgiving ourselves. If Jesus can forgive us, then we can forgive ourselves.

Psalm 103:8-13 talks about God’s love for us.

### Psalms 103:8-13

(8) The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. (9) He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; (10) he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. (11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; (12) as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (13) As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

If God loves us so much and does not hold our sins against us, then we must forgive ourselves. We must not give in to self-pity or self-loathing. Instead, we must stand on the promises of God and believe in who he says we are. We must realize that if we are good enough for God, then we are good enough to be forgiven.

It doesn’t matter how far you have gone, what you have done, or what has been done to you. You can be forgiven. You can seek forgiveness, and you can forgive yourself. Don’t believe the lie of the Devil who tells you that you are worthless and deserve what was done to you.

When you have said “yes” to Jesus then you are more than a conqueror! You are victorious and an overcomer! Someone with a heart of forgiveness can always forgive themselves. It may take help and support from other believers, but it is possible and liberating, in Christ.

## Conclusion

It is important to understand having a heart of forgiveness and what it means. It goes hand in hand with having a heart of [repentance](https://www.celllifechurch.org/resources/sermon-notes/a-heart-of-repentance/), [encouragement](https://www.celllifechurch.org/resources/sermon-notes/a-heart-of-encouragement/), and [thankfulness](https://www.celllifechurch.org/resources/sermon-notes/a-heart-of-thankfulness/). The gospel of Jesus Christ is centered on forgiveness. God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins past, present, and future. We must extend this same forgiveness to others and ourselves in grace.

Cell Life Church has produced a [miniseries of 3 teachings titled Forgiveness](https://www.celllifechurch.org/resources/discussion-series/forgiveness/), where we go deeper into this subject. If you would like to explore more about forgiving others, seeking forgiveness, and forgiving yourself then we encourage you to watch those for free on our website.