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Introduction

Are we supposed to forgive others? Under what conditions do we forgive? Would that apply to murder, rape, theft, or just an argument? How often do we forgive the same offender? What happens if we don't forgive?

These are tough questions but we will look at them and see what the Bible has to say. We will also keep our eyes on Spiritual Warfare as we examine FORGIVENESS so we discover how the devil uses forgiveness to torment the believer.

We will also see how not forgiving can affect our physical and emotional health and lifestyle.

I will be using mostly the KJV of the bible and some other versions. I will also refer to other articles already published to broaden this overview of forgiveness.

Biblical Terms For Forgiveness

P. G. Mathew offers this explanation
of Forgiveness in his 1995 web article

Of all the world's religions, only Christianity offers complete forgiveness. Only the Bible-consisting of the Old and New Testaments-reveals to us an infinite, personal God who has a plan by which he completely forgives the sins of everyone who repents and believes in Jesus Christ...and this God not only forgives sins, but he forgives them forever.

What is this wonderful, biblical forgiveness? There are several words used for forgiveness in the Bible: three Hebrew words in the Old Testament and four Greek words in the New Testament. **The first** Hebrew word is *kafar*, from which we get the meaning "to cover," as in, "to cover or blot out our sins." **The second** word is *nasa*, which means "to bear, to take away." **The third** word is *salach*, which is used only with reference to God forgiving the sins of people. It means "to pardon," as in, "our God [who will] freely pardon." (Isaiah 55:7)

In the New Testament, first you find the Greek word *apoluein*, which means, "to release." There also is the wonderful word *charizomai*, which comes from the word *charis*, or "grace." *Charizomai* means, "to grace you," to freely give you heaven when you deserve hell. What a truly beautiful word! The third word is *aphesis*, from the Greek word *aphiemi*, "to send away." Finally, there is *paresis*, which means, "to disregard"-this word is used in the context that God will not see our offenses, but rather will disregard them.

Forgiveness A Two Way Street

The term, "Forgiveness", according to the dictionary, means, "the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven." I'll bet you didn't know it is a two way street.

I can forgive you and you can receive forgiveness. If I forgive and you do not accept it, you stay in a state of anxiety, frustration and sometimes even hate.

Your unforgiveness keeps you tied to me as long as you do not let it go. It is still an unresolved conflict. However, my willingness to forgive you has freed me from any unresolved conflict. Here's why:

1. By forgiving you, I break the cycle of hate.
2. By forgiving you, I bury the hatchet that binds us together in conflict.
3. By forgiving you, I no longer hold conflict as my primary focus. I can move on to other things.
4. By forgiving you, I can look upon you with a new perspective that excludes hate.
5. By forgiving you, I am delivered from the attacks of the devil that seek to torment me in the situation.
6. By forgiving you, I cleanse my attitude from bitterness so I do not defile others around me.
7. By forgiving you, I eliminate the stress and related illnesses associated with dealing with an offense over and over again.

In order to forgive and be forgiven, some things have to be crystal clear.
Consider these:

- The one being forgiven must acknowledge that he or she is responsible for the fault.
- The one forgiving must be willing to truly forget the fault, so much so, that it never again becomes the primary topic of thought or discussion. (I have a saying that helps me. It goes like this, "Lets not go down that road again.")
- The one forgiving must accept and acknowledge any wrongdoing he or she may have done during the conflict. It could be insults, throwing things or even a demeaning tone of voice.
- Both parties must forgive themselves. Often, the person at fault can never forgive himself or herself, even when the other has forgiven them and God has forgiven them.

Forgiveness

A Biblical Perspective

A definition for forgiveness could be -- giving up my right to hurt you, for hurting me. It is impossible to live on this fallen planet without getting hurt,

offended, misunderstood, lied to, and rejected. Learning how to respond properly is one of the basics of the Christian life. Remember, forgiveness is a Free Will choice.

The word “forgive” means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt. When we wrong someone, we seek his or her forgiveness in order for the relationship to be restored. It is important to remember that forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. Instead, it is an act of love, mercy, and grace.

How we act toward that person may change. It doesn't mean we will put ourselves back into a harmful situation or that we suddenly accept or approve of the person's continued wrong behavior. It simply means we release them from the wrong they committed against us. We forgive them because God forgave us ([Ephesians 4:31-32](#) and [Romans 5:8](#)).

Reasons To Forgive

- We forgive because God has forgiven us. ([Ephesians 4:32](#))
- We forgive in obedience to God. ([Matthew 6:14-15](#); [Romans 12:18](#))
- We forgive others to gain control of our lives from hurt emotions. ([Genesis 4:1-8](#))
- We forgive so we won't become bitter and defile those around us. ([Hebrews 12:14-15](#))

There are times we don't feel like forgiving those who have wronged us. It is easier to act our way into feeling than to feel our way into acting. Having a nature of not forgiving others brings about bitterness, and bitterness has been linked to stress-related illnesses by some medical researchers. By forgiving others, we free ourselves spiritually and emotionally. Forgiveness is an act of our own personal will in obedience and submission to God's will, trusting God to bring emotional healing. (Excerpts from AllAboutGod.com)

Divine Forgiveness

Divine Forgiveness...God's restoration of relationship that entails the removal of objective guilt. Thus, to forgive the offense against God's holiness or the perpetrator of the offense are synonymous. Forgiveness can be extended both to nations (especially Israel) and to individuals.

The Old Testament.... God is depicted in the Old Testament as merciful. He is described as "slow to anger" and "abounding in love/mercy, " "compassionate and gracious" (**Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; John 4:2**). God is lenient toward his people, not treating them as their sin deserves (**Ezra 9:13-15 ; Psalm 78:35-38; 103:8-10**), and willing to forgive wickedness, rebellion, and sin (**Exod 34:7; Num 14:18**).

National Forgiveness... In one case, God forgave a nation other than Israel and did not bring the punishment on it that he had planned. God as righteous was compelled to bring judgment on Nineveh, but God as merciful sent Jonah to warn the city of the impending judgment. The Ninevites, including the king, believed and repented of their evil ways and their violence (Jonah 3:8). As a result God as merciful relented from the evil that he had planned to bring on them. This is an illustration of the general principle by which God deals with nations (**Jer 18:7-8**).

Israel is distinguished from other nations as being chosen by God out of all the nations of the earth as his special possession (cf. **Exod 19:15 ; Deut 7:6 ; 14:2 ; 26:18 ; 1 Kings 3:8 ; 1 Chron 16:13 ; Psalm 33:12 ; 105:6 ; 106:4-5 ; 135:4 ; Isa 41:8 ; 43:10 ; 44:1-2**).

Israel's election has its roots in God's covenant with Abraham, renewed with Isaac and Jacob, thus giving God's relationship with the nation an unconditional basis (**Gen 12:1-3; 15:18; Genesis 17:8 Genesis 17:21; 22:17; 26:3-5 ; 28:13-15 ; 35:11-12 ; Exod 2:24 ; 6:4 ; Exodus 13:5 Exodus 13:11 ; 32:13; 33:1; Deut 1:8; 4:37; 7:8; 10:11; 26:15; 34:4; Joshua 1:6; 21:43-44; 1 Kings 8:40; 1 Chron 16:16-18; 2 Chron 20:7; Neh 9:7-8; Psalm 105:8-11**).

So, in spite of Israel's disobedience, after he has punished the nation, God is committed to dealing mercifully with it because of the covenant made with the fathers and his love for them (**Lev 26:42; Deut 4:31; 9:26-27; 2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 106:40-46; Jer 33:25-26; Micah 7:20**).

God unconditionally promised the land and prosperity in the land to the fathers and their descendants (Abrahamic covenant). Their descendants, however, would possess the promises only on the condition of their obedience to the Law (Mosaic covenant), and, after they had sinned, would be restored to a state of prosperity and security in the land only on the

condition of national repentance (**Deut 30:1-10; 31:14-32:47; Book of Judges 1 Kings 8:33-40 1 Kings 8:46-51; 2 Chronicles 6:24-31 2 Chronicles 6:36-39; 7:13-16) II Chronicles 7:14**).

God as merciful made unconditional promises to Abraham and his descendants, but God as righteous demanded obedience to the Torah as the condition for the realization of these promises for each generation.

Individual Forgiveness.... God, as righteous, required obedience from individual Israelites; by observance of all that God commanded each would live (**Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29**). Only some violations of the Torah were forgivable.

The Day of Atonement was a significant means by which individual sins could be forgiven. In Leviticus, chapter 16, Aaron (or his descendants) is instructed first to expiate (Atone For) himself and his house annually. Then, taking two goats, Aaron is to offer one chosen by lot as a sin offering for the expiation of the sanctuary (v.16), while over the other he is to confess all the wickedness of the sons of Israel and all their rebellion, their sin and release this second goat into the wilderness. The released goat removes all wickedness. This was a national ritual designed to remove individual offenses against God's holiness.

In his dealing with individual Israelites, God as merciful stands in tension with God as righteous. He does not deal with individual sin as it deserves, but forgives and mitigates punishment.

In addition, God forgives people who should not be forgivable; for the sake of mercy, God violates the conditions of his own covenant and often acts more leniently than the Torah would allow.

David murdered Uriah and committed adultery with Bathsheba (**2 Sam 11**); both actions were punishable by death so that both David and Bathsheba should have been killed. Instead, God forgave David (and presumably Bathsheba), although he was punished for his deeds (**2 Sam 12**). In Psalm 51, said to have been occasioned by Nathan's rebuke, David asks God to forgive him (vv. 1-2) and expresses confidence that his sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart are acceptable to God (vv. 16-17).

Solomon went so far as to worship other gods, including the detestable god Molech (**1 Kings 11**). Although God removed the kingdom from his son as punishment, Solomon was not judged according to the Torah, which required death for those who turned away from worshiping and serving God (**Deut 17:2-7**).

God's dealings with the subsequent kings of Israel and Judah also reflect a much greater leniency than was allowed in the Torah. In spite of all the evil Ahab had done, God did not kill Ahab, which was the required penalty for his sin of complicity in the murder of Naboth. Because Ahab repented God did not even bring punishment on Ahab's house (**1 Kings 21:27-29**), as he had originally planned.

Repentance

Repentance is a factor causing God to depart from the standards of the Torah. The individual is understood on analogy to the nation, so that, just as the nation is restored to favor after repentance, so is the individual. Although the prophets mostly spoke to Israel as a nation, in **Ezekiel 18:21-23, 27** the individual Israelite is addressed and offered God's unconditional forgiveness. Repentance after committing a violation of the Torah punishable by death has the effect of bringing about God's mercy.

The prophets often spoke of a time when the nation would be restored to the land and forgiven. At this time, God would also give to individual Israelites the means by which to meet the conditions of the Mosaic

The New Testament...The tension between God's dealings with human beings in terms of his mercy and righteousness finds resolution in the New Testament. That the promises of forgiveness and spiritual transformation have become realities through the appearance, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ is assumed throughout the New Testament. This resolution pertains to the nation, individuals within the nation, and individual Gentiles.

John the Baptist offered forgiveness to the nation on the condition of repentance (**Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3**). His offer exemplified the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous, as shown by the fact John rejected some who had not first produced the fruit of repentance before

seeking the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. He evidently assumed that Israel was the totality of Jews who were faithful to the covenant. John the Baptist pointed to the resolution of this tension, however, when he said that the one who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit (**Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16**).

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, and offered his hearers the possibility of entrance into this kingdom on the condition of repentance. He was the mediator of salvation, which included the extension of forgiveness (**Matt 9:3-6; Mark 2:7-12; Luke 5:21-25; 7:36-50**).

Like John the Baptist, Jesus required that individuals appropriate the offer of salvation; the process of entering the kingdom was that of becoming a child, by passively receiving God's forgiveness. It is for this reason that Jesus said to his opponents that "the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you" (**Matt 21:31b**).

Jesus' offer of the kingdom to all on the condition of repentance led to the charge that he associated with tax-collectors and sinners, which his opponents considered offensive to God's righteousness (**Matt 9:10-13; 11:19; Mark 2:15-17 Luke 5:30-32; 7:34; 15:2**). The offense probably lay not in the fact that Jesus taught that God would forgive the repentant, but that Jesus actively sought out sinners and offered them the possibility of forgiveness. In Jesus' opponents' view, sinners ought to take the initiative.

One must remember that for a Jew, repentance meant more than simple remorse; it included **“Moral Reformation”**. This explains why some of Jesus' sayings emphasize the need for righteousness in order to be included in the kingdom of God. The same stress on God as both merciful and righteous found in the Old Testament period is found in Jesus' teaching about the kingdom. The mere fact that Jesus required repentance as a condition of entrance into the kingdom is sufficient to make the point.

These two aspects of Jesus' teaching, however, are not in tension, because he saw his time as that of eschatological salvation, the time of the resolution of the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous in his dealings with human beings.

* **eschatological**... the part of theology concerned with death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of mankind.

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and later taught that his death would be the means by which the new covenant would be realized. He also taught that the Spirit would be given after his return to the Father (**John 7:39; 14-16**).

Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God led to his arrest and execution. This had two consequences.

First, in response to the crisis in his ministry that this produced, Jesus incorporated his rejection and impending death into his message. He interpreted his death as vicarious and expiatory, as the means by which forgiveness and renewal would come to Israel and the nations in spite of Israel's rejection of the messenger of the kingdom.

Jesus understood his death in light of the destiny of the Servant as a guilt offering for many (**Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:37**). He also interpreted his impending death at the Last Supper as that of the Passover lamb whose sacrifice would bring about the possibility of forgiveness and the realization of the new covenant (**Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20**).

Second, Jesus' rejection would bring into being a messianic community, the church. Since Jesus required personal repentance as a condition for entrance into the kingdom of God, the potential existed for distinguishing a faithful remnant from those who were unrepentant and disobedient. Judgment would come to those who rejected him, while those who accepted Jesus' message would receive the Spirit and be constituted as the messianic community, for whom some of the promises would be realized (**Acts 1:8 ; 2:1-13**).

Also Gentiles would become part of this community and receive the Holy Spirit (**Matt 28:18-19; Acts 10**). Jesus still foresaw, however, a future for the nation (**Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6-7**), when God would bring about salvation on a national basis.

Paul writes that Jesus' death is the means by which God's forgiveness comes not only to the Jew but also to the Gentile (**Gal 3:7-9; cf. Acts 3:25**). Like Jesus, he sees the tension between God as merciful and God as righteous resolved in the realization of the promises of forgiveness and spiritual transformation.

Human Forgiveness.... In the Lord's Prayer, receiving forgiveness from God is joined to forgiving others (**Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4**). Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant makes the point that human beings are obliged to forgive because God has forgiven them (**Matt 18:23-35**).

God's forgiveness is actually said to be conditional upon forgiving others (**Matt 6:14; 18:35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37**). Jesus says that there ought to be no limit on the number of times that one should forgive another so long as the offender repents and asks for forgiveness (**Matt 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-4**). (Excerpts from Barry Smith's discourse, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary)

The Parable of The Unforgiving Servant

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.²⁴ And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.²⁵ But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.²⁶ The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.²⁷ Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.²⁹ And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.³⁰ And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.³² Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:³³ Should not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

³⁴ And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.³⁵ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do

also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” (Matt. 18:23-35)

This parable has at least 5 good points to consider about forgiveness. They are:

1. We are Stewards of our Heavenly Father’s stuff and must do things in accordance to His will, not ours.
2. Because our King (Jesus) showed mercy to us, we are to show mercy to others that are in our debt.
3. Failure to be like our King is to be wicked and causes us to fall out of favor with our lord.
4. What we do to others, God will do to us. If we are merciful, so is He and vice versa.
5. We are to, from the heart, forgive those that are indebted to us when they ask for mercy.

Do you serve God or your feelings?

Joyce Meyer asks this question in an article published on the Internet

Do you serve God or your feelings? Now, that may sound like an odd question for a believer, but really, it isn't. Let me put it this way... When you ask God to forgive you, do you accept His forgiveness right away or do you waste time feeling guilty?

So many Christians struggle with guilt and condemnation. They're trying to pay God back for what they did wrong when Jesus already made it right.

God's unconditional love is a very difficult concept for people to accept because, in the world, there's always payment for everything we receive. It's just how things work here. But God is not like people! Aren't you glad about that? We need to learn that whether or not we feel forgiven, we're forgiven. (Excerpts from Joyce Meyer Ministries)

Some folks cannot forgive themselves. I know of several people that say they cannot follow God because of all the bad things they have done in the past. They do not understand the grace of God nor His unconditional love that wipes the slate clean when we repent. John, the Apostle, made this clear as he wrote his first letter to the church. *“If we confess our sins, he is*

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

The emphasis in **I John 1:9** is the word, "All". God cleanses us from *All*, meaning everything we have ever done that was offensive to God. That means we are clean and pure as white snow. He actually tosses our sins in a *sea of forgetfulness*.

The phrase *sea of forgetfulness* is not actually in Scripture. When people mention the "sea of forgetfulness," they are usually referring to several passages that talk about God's forgiveness, and how when we are justified in Christ, God forgets our sins so completely that they might as well be buried at the bottom of an ocean.

The main passage that contains the idea of a sea of forgetfulness is **Micah 7:19**: "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Another verse, **Isaiah 1:18**, says that God will make our scarlet sins as white as wool. **Psalm 103:12** expresses the thought in yet another way: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

A sea of forgetfulness represents a place where our sins are sent very far away from us, so that they can no longer affect us. It does not mean that we, as believers, no longer sin or that our sins are erased from God's mind. It only means that our sins no longer have any bearing on our salvation. Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection is the only means by which we are saved (**Acts 4:12**). When we trust in Christ, we come under a new paradigm. Although our sins still grieve God and cause ruin in our lives and in the lives of others, our salvation is secure (**Romans 8:1, 31-39**).

The idea that our sins are lost in a sea of forgetfulness is a comfort. We are no longer judged by our sins (**Romans 8:1**), and that fact frees us to live life in a way that pleases God. When we fear judgment, ironically, we are tempted to sin even more, because we want to escape from the fear of judgment, and sin is often pleasurable for a time (see **Hebrews 11:25**). But, eventually, the fear of judgment returns. This is a vicious cycle. Spiritual growth requires that we recognize the total forgiveness that exists in Jesus Christ and that we rest in that forgiveness.

If we admit that we are sinners and trust in Christ, He forgives and cleanses us (**1 John 1:9**). Our sins are no longer part of the equation and will not be remembered **Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12**.

(Excerpts from GotQuestions.com)

Too Good To Be Saved?

Many people do not believe they require salvation. They believe that they are good enough to reach heaven on their own merit, and they do not accept the truth about their own fallen state. They use the old copout to avoid any religious discussion by saying, "I am a good person. I do not hurt other people and I try my best to be good. Sometimes, I even give money to a good cause or to a church."

These people are deceived, because they do not understand the scripture. They live in guilt and are being tormented by the devil for sins of the past that they asked forgiveness for and that God has already forgiven. (**1 John 1:8-10**). Every person needs God's. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." **Isa. 64:6**

Conditions Suitable And Not Suitable For Forgiveness

Under what conditions do we forgive?

I think that we are to forgive in all conditions but the extent of the offense plays a big part in our "After the offense" life. Also who is causing the offense makes a big difference on our plans for forgiving. A brother or sister in Christ is different than a stranger and the situation in which the offence occurs is a factor as well.

I am sure you have heard of the answer Jesus gave when asked about forgiveness. I call it the 70 X 7 Scenario. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?... Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven. **Matthew 18:21-22**

Note that Peter refers to a brother. Jesus says 70 X 7, which I believe, is a metaphor for an unlimited amount. This would be consistent with God's unlimited mercy.

The fact that there is a clear repentance on the part of the offender indicates that the offender is seeking reconciliation. I believe that repeated assaults by one individual would establish a pattern that is predictable. To extend unlimited mercy would be an act of God's love that transcends our human ability. The one being offended must above all else examine the motives and intent of the one causing the fault. Here's why:

- The devil can use anyone to steal your joy and crush your spirit. If a brother or anyone else is continually offending you, there's got to be an underlying reason that needs to be dealt with.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as family members, are close to you and can, if not corrected, dominate you with offensive actions that are meant to control you. That's not good.
- It is not good for you or the offender to continue a relationship of offense and forgiveness. It will cause unwanted stress and anxiety.

Under What Conditions Do We Not Forgive?

There are no conditions in which we do not have to forgive. Jesus made that clear when He said, "**Matthew 6:14-15**: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

There are however a few conditions where it is not advisable to forgive without an apology. Let's look at them.

- ***When the offender does not ask to be forgiven.*** If we forgive before they ask, we diminish the seriousness of the offense and suggest to the offender that we can be played or controlled by their oppression. Jesus said we were to forgive every time they ask.

- ***When we stand up for what we believe.*** We, by standing up for what we believe, run the risk of offending others or being offended by others. To forgive in this situation can cause the offender to dismiss the premise of our stand and further attack our beliefs.

Will God be mad at you for standing your ground against the attack of the devil that came through the offender? Peter told the early church, *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world”* **I Peter 5:8-9**

God will not be angry. He tells us, in no uncertain terms, that we are to watch out for offenses that come our way as fiery darts. The sad part is that often these darts are channeled through people. They are energized by attitudes of jealousy, envy and other fleshly emotions.

It is important to remember who our enemy really is. It is not the offender. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* **Ephesians 6:12**

Our real battle is with these evil entities that are bent on our destruction. They will use any human they can find to channel their lies. We, of course, need to avoid them or confront those who hurl the fiery darts of Satan and we are also empowered by the Holy spirit to speak to these evil ones, in the name of Jesus, and bind them from further attacks and cast them out of our reality. *(See my other eBook, The Believer’s Authority for a deeper discussion on Spiritual Warfare.)*

Matthew 6:14-15 is another key scripture on forgiveness. Verse 9-13 is where Jesus shares the Lord’s Prayer. Then He says we need to forgive men their trespasses so our heavenly Father can forgive us. However, this does not mean we make every offender our bosme buddy.

There are some folks that harbor hate towards you for lots of different reasons and will not even consider an apology. Yet others are too stubborn to initiate a discussion much less offer an oapology.

We are still admonished by the scriptures to forgive them, even if we can not reconcile. It's the only way to gain forgiveness from God. The offense is not the focal point of Jesus' teaching. The focal point is forgiveness because it mirrors the nature and will of God.

Forgiveness And Reconciliation

There are times when we can forgive but, because of the offence, can never forget. Some things that happen to us are terrible. Consider Murder of a loved one by a drug user that is breaking into your dwelling. How about a violent rape that causes emotional damage? What about an affair that destroys your marriage?

When there are serious emotional wounds, it is almost impossible to forgive to the point of reconciliation. The thing is...we are not asked to be best friends with a terrorist or violent attacker. We do need to forgive from a distance so we are not emotionally tied to the offender.

The devil loves to keep God's children in a state of confusion and hate for those that have hurt them in the past. He will bring those times up frequently so we dwell on them, get angry and stay trapped in a vicious cycle of torment. The best policy is to forgive, try to forget and move on with God. He will heal the broken hearted and restore the weary soul to good health. It might take a while but it will happen as we walk with Him by faith.

Reconciliation is important among husband and wife, boss and employer, family members, and friends. However, the 70 X 7 rule still applies. The offender has the responsibility to initiate reconciliation. The way to open this type of discussion is to start with a heart felt apology.

I know what you are thinking. You want to look at **Matthew 5:23-24**. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

When you see a "Therefore" in scripture, you should read the full context previous to it to determine why the writer is saying Therefore. In **Matthew 5:23-24** the text that is before the therefore reads like this.

“21...Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Notice that the context is talking about a would-be offender and the judgment for certain offenses. *The offense mentioned is being angry with your brother without a cause.* If this fits us, we are to lay down our offering at the altar and seek reconciliation.

The action is directed to the offender, not the one that was offended. The 70 X 7 rule still applies to the one who was offended. They can forgive, forget and move on. It would be good to stay open to the possibility of an apology should it occur, even if it is many years later. We, as Christians, can also pray for the offender, that he or she would come to a place of wanting reconciliation. Our prayer should be against the devil that holds the offenders captive and deliverance from the guilt they carry every day as a result of their offense.

What Forgiveness Isn't

6 myths that may be keeping you from letting go.

By Denise George...Published in Today's Christian Women

Myth 1...*Forgiving means the offender didn't really hurt you.*

"Forgiveness is a redemptive response to having been wronged and wounded," wrote author Lewis B. Smedes. "Only those who have wronged and wounded us are candidates for forgiveness. If they injure us accidentally, we excuse them. We only forgive the ones we blame." Choosing to forgive her father acknowledges the pain Jamie endured at his hands. It also begins her healing.

Myth 2...*Forgiving means you excuse the offender's hurtful act.*

An accidental "slip of the tongue" needs no forgiveness because it isn't deliberately caused. Intentional hurts—like my friend's betrayal—need forgiveness. When I forgave my friend, my forgiveness didn't lessen the impact of her painful action. But forgiveness unlocked my own "prison" of bitterness.

Myth 3...*Before forgiving, you must first understand why the offender hurt you.*

Our human mind yearns to make all the confusing puzzle pieces fit together neatly before we forgive. However, the truth is we can forgive an offender even if we never discover the reasons for the inflicted pain. Author Philip Yancey writes in *What's So Amazing About Grace*, "Not to forgive imprisons me in the past and locks out all potential for change. I thus yield control to another, my enemy, and doom myself to suffer the consequences of the wrong."

Myth 4...*Before forgiving the offender, you must feel forgiving.*

Forgiveness has nothing to do with how you feel. You can feel hurt, betrayed, and angry, and still completely forgive the one who wounded you. Biblical forgiveness is an act of the will. It's a choice you make.

Can you still feel angry after you forgive? Yes! Anger means you're in touch with reality—it's part of being human. But be careful to aim that anger at what your offender did, not at the offender. Then let your anger push you toward justice.

Myth 5...*Forgiving means the offender will face no consequences.*

When we choose to forgive someone, our forgiveness doesn't "let him off the hook." Forgiveness also doesn't mean justice shouldn't be served.

Myth #6... *When your offender is punished, you'll find closure*

I left the 6th myth off because it was too graphic.) It spoke to the emotional hurts from an offense that still lingered, even when justice was enacted on the offender. Closure does not always happen.

Confronting The Offender

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe [unto him], through whom they come! 2It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3**Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.** 4And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. **Luke 17:3-4**

Jesus made it clear that we are to confront the offender with a strong rebuke, showing him or her the error of his or her ways. He also says this with regard to brethren, not strangers. However, he does warn us to, “Take Head” or watch carefully so you donot fall under the attacks of evil people.

With those in the community of Faith, we are to be ready to forgive when the offender repents. We are also encouraged to rebuke or express sharp disapproval or criticism of (someone) because of their behavior or actions. Don't be afraid to challenge their authority and criticise them for their evil actions. I believe this is a good course of action for anyone that has been offended.

Are You Offended Because You Are Too Sensitive?

We must be careful not to wear our feelings on our shoulders. I have seen several folks that get offended at the smallest things. Sometimes the would-be offender was not even aware that they were being offensive. Yet my friends jumped at the chance to become offended.

When this happens, it is a clear sign of deep insecurity and a very low self-worth. It's not a good way to build friendships. It's also an indication that

this over sensitive person is being used by the devil to cause contention and anxiety. Most of the time, it is a cry for attention and sympathy.

Conditional Forgiveness

It should be clear by now that forgiveness is a conditional thing.

- **Mat 6:12** (TEB) "Forgive us the wrongs that we have done, as we forgive the wrongs others have done us."
- **Luke 6:37** (NIV) "...Forgive, and you will be forgiven."
- **Mat 6:14-15** (NIV) "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But, if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will *not* forgive your sins."

Dealing With Play Actors

I have had several encounters where my offenders were play acting as in a movie, living out a role, so as to deceive me into thinking he wanted forgiveness but I could see it was clearly an act. Sincerity is essential in the giving and acceptance of forgiveness. That's because healing from God is transmitted from one to the other and it is not a joke.

Take the habitual drunk that begs for forgiveness but never follows through. This is a prime example of what I am saying here. There must be guidelines to giving forgiveness in cases like this...things like attending AA or getting professional counseling, etc. Also, in the case of adultery, it is a break in trust and some borders or guidelines must be established to insure sincerity.

Denial Is Not Forgiveness

The inability to really forgive is often due to a false concept that "forgetting is forgiving". Forgetting is NOT forgiving. To be sure, if we forgive we *will* forget as a result. But the reverse is not true: forgetting is not forgiving--it is denial.

Ps 51:6 (NAS) Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being...

If we attempt to achieve a bogus forgiveness by deliberately putting "out of mind" the offense, we might be fooling ourselves and others that we have "forgiven". But all of the emotions and plots and hurt are still there--only held back by force of will in a deliberate denial.

But then we see "that person" again and all the bitterness and pain rise up again within us. Or, in the off moment--when such mental gymnastics cannot be maintained--we catch ourselves in an elaborate meditation of revenge or fit of rage and anger. Then we see just how deep and effective this sort of "forgiveness" is.

A mind "bent" by denial has a nasty habit of "snapping back" in the worst of moments.

1 John 2:9 (Wey) Any one who professes to be in the light and yet hates his brother is still in darkness.

Denial is merely a delusion: flimsy, fake, and shallow. Forgiveness is real: robust and solid and deep. It is not an avoiding of the truth, but a specific dealing with it squarely, however painful.

Consider God's perspective. Nothing is hidden from His sight: the evil intent, the hidden lust, the damage done, the choosing of that which is wrong, etc. And yet He is the author and *originator* of forgiveness. If we are going to really forgive, we are going to have to do it His way: with our eyes open.

For those God chooses to forgive, He will "forget" their sins, "remembering them no more". But let us not accuse the omniscient God of not knowing something or of being ignorant of any fact. He has told us that *nothing* is beyond His sight. Rather let us understand the "figure of speech" and spiritual dynamic of *how* God forgives.

Heb 8:12 (NIV) "For I will *forgive* their wickedness and will *remember* their sins no more."

The order here is essential. Forgiveness first, forgetting second. Until real forgiveness takes place, the offense is "in our faces" as regards that person, and it is the same with God. The sin comes between us, and cannot be "forgotten" until dealt with. If and when we

enter into true forgiveness, we can then regard the person without the "offense" looming first and foremost between us.

Isa 43:25 (NIV) "I, even I, am he who *blots out* your transgressions, for my own sake, and *remembers* your sins no more."

The Lure of Sin

Another barrier to forgiveness is sin that surfaces as bitterness; revenge, hatred, etc. It has a perverted sort of appeal. Who has not felt the intoxicating lure of a grandiose meditation of scorching retribution? While we know this is wrong, it sure is great fun in the moment to fondle such thoughts.

Eph 4:26-27,31 (NIV) "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Vengeance Is The Lord's

Rom 12:19 (NIV) 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.

Surely God has more power to pour wrath on our enemies than we do, and He surely sees the evil done all too clearly. So the thought may strike us to let Him do the dirty work. But when we think this through, it may not turn out, as the carnal man within us might like. For let us face the plain fact that God has this habit of forgiving people and extending great mercy, at least for the time being.

So... we may not see fire from heaven come down to consume those we wish would receive God's vengeance. It is not that He is letting them off by some magic or deflection of mind; it is just that He may take the painful punishment Himself. (Excerpts from *The Miracle of Forgiveness*)

Let's Not Forget The Power of God

Some offenses are so terrible that it is almost impossible to overcome, but God gives us the power, through His Spirit, to forgive. I have found that God always tells us to do things that are beyond our natural capability. He does that so He can participate in our lives to demonstrate His power, love and grace. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." **II Timothy 1:7**

Forgiveness is no different. We must call upon the power of God to sustain us in the pain and sorrow that comes with being hurt. He alone can heal our broken hearts and make right our path in life. God is still a mighty refuge and a very present help in times of need. **Psalm 46:1**

Conclusion

Our gracious Lord will be there for us, to heal, restore, bless and love us back to a full and rewarding life. He will take care of those that offend us whether it's a stranger seeking to hurt us in a violent act or a brother or sister that is jealous. ***Remember, God is greater than the offense or the offender.***

I'd like to share these final thoughts written in an article on the Internet by Rev. Charles Blair, pastor of New Church LIVE in Bryn Athyn, PA...When we forgive others, there is a freedom where we are no longer *shackled* by our own anger.

It moves us from our selfish illusions to a beautiful reality. It is hard work. But letting go of the fantasies that we can change the past, that we can change others, or even that we are the ones who can change ourselves, opens room for God to help us ward off the resentment we feel.

Each time we forgive, it paves the way for the next time we need to forgive. Practicing the courage and patience, and letting the Lord into the process of forgiveness becomes like exercising a muscle, it grows stronger and stronger. Together with Him, we can come to a point where forgiveness is intuitive, a blessed way to live!

May the Lord bless you and keep you as you seek Him for the power to forgive.