

“Father, I’ve been so hurt and this is difficult. But I choose to forgive. And I believe you’re helping me in my weakness.”

07) Release it.

The battlefield for continued forgiveness is in the mind. Deal sternly with thoughts that take you back to the offense.

“Lord, help me to cast down any thoughts that do not honor Christ.”

CLOSE

Today is Easter Sunday. There’s no other day like it! It’s the day the Creator of all things chose to forgive us of our sins against Him! This is nothing we deserved. As a matter of fact, it’s what we least deserved! It was an act of grace. We’re reminded of that in Romans 5: “God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” He initiated the process of forgiveness simply out of love.

God is calling us to imitate Himself. He wants us to forgive and release our hurts, even when others don’t deserve it. I will go as far to say that you are never more like Jesus than when you genuinely forgive someone who has hurt you deeply.

Many people consider forgiveness an act of weakness. But I beg to differ! Forgiveness isn’t a weak man’s game. It is for those who are internally strong enough and rise to the occasion and live like Jesus! And the word of God is true: as you walk this out, He will make you strong!

Life Notes Family Matters with Pastor Cory

13. Forgive and Forget

INTRODUCTION

My son, Easton, has always enjoyed sports! In the last two years, he has played basketball, soccer, and baseball. Now he’s looking ahead for football in the fall. Go Noles! ☺

During a soccer game, the ball went out. On an inbound throw, Easton accidentally touched the ball with his hand (for you non-soccer fans that is a foul). I’m not sure if the teenage referee saw it or not, but he didn’t blow the whistle. This didn’t set well with Easton, who is the ultimate rule keeper! In his mind, if something is right, it’s right. If it’s wrong, it’s wrong! All of a sudden, Easton stopped playing the game. He went to the ref and told him what happened. The young man kindly ignored his concern, but Easton was incessant! He just couldn’t let it go!

A lot of us do this in the real world. We often miss the enjoyment of the game, because something has gone wrong and we cannot move past it. I’m a lot like that. And if you’re honest, you probably are too. Many of us have the tendency to hold on to things we should let go. It’s been said, “Unforgiveness is like drinking a cup of poison and expecting the other person to die.” This couldn’t be more true! A lack of forgiveness is the root cause of many church splits, divorces, and friendship divides. Not to mention the effect on our mind, spirit, and health.

Though unfortunate, hurt can come from many places. It can come from a spouse, child, close friend, teacher, past relationship, coach, race, parent, government, and so on. But our lives cannot be defined by what has happened to us, but how we deal with those events.

In this final installment of Life Notes from me, I’d like to tackle the issue of unforgiveness in the life of a Believer. I genuinely hope this brings betterment to your life and relationships!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Perhaps you’re holding on to a hurt. Not sure? Asking these questions may help you determine if so.

Are there walls around my heart?

A military fortress has walls to protect it from harm. Many will keep others at arm’s length to ensure they aren’t hurt again. This is not healthy.

Do I bring up past hurts?

This is a huge indicator that something has not been truly forgiven! When someone else brings it up, how quickly do you move on?

Am I withholding any good thing from this person?

Perhaps this is affection or sex in marriage or encouragement. This may not apply to some situations such as a person who is unrepentant in their sin of molestation.

Do I feel peace with God?

It's important to realize that a barrier between you and another is a barrier between you and the Lord.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

Many people misunderstand what forgiveness looks like. There can be many misconceptions. So before we jump in to the act of forgiveness, let's discuss what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness is not ignoring a hurt.

"Forgive and forget" sounds nice. But we all know it's unrealistic. We may never forget, but we choose to overlook once it has been forgiven.

Forgiveness is not restoring the relationship.

In some cases, this is the last thing that needs to happen.

Forgiveness is not putting a stamp of approval on a person/event.

Your act to forgive doesn't say, "What you did to me is okay."

Forgiveness is not a one-time event.

It would be wonderful if this was the case, but it isn't. Forgiveness is a continual process. In some cases, this process may last a lifetime.

Forgiveness is not always for the other person.

More times than not, forgiveness is for you. You can't control how they may respond to the confrontation. You can only care for your own heart.

STEPS TOWARD FORGIVENESS

Paul makes no bones about it: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." This isn't a suggestion! It can seem harsh, but it puts things into perspective when we consider how much Christ has forgiven of us.

Obviously, there is no formula or quick fix for forgiving another person. However, here are a few steps that will guide you through:

01) Take it to the Lord.

The first step in forgiveness is laying the offense at the altar of God.

"Father, I know it's necessary for me to have this conversation and forgive the person who hurt me. Please purify my motives and begin to remove any bitterness or revenge from my heart. Help this to be good for me and them."

02) Seek wise counsel.

Before talking with the one who hurt you, discuss it through with a trustworthy friend. Do this with someone who is honest and balanced.

"I need to deal with someone who hurt me. I want to share it with you before I go to them. I need you to be brutally honest with me and make sure I do this in a godly manner."

03) Bring your hurt to the table.

In Matthew 18, Jesus makes it clear that holding an offense is unacceptable for the believer. If we feel someone has sinned against us, we must deal with it appropriately.

"I'm offended in my heart and I need to talk to you about it. This is what happened and how it made me feel..."

04) Take the high road.

It's been said, "Hurt people, hurt people." It may be true that you unknowingly hurt this person and their action was, in their mind, self-defense. This may not be the case, but is worth exploring. Owning any offense that you may have caused will show them your heart to forgive.

"Maybe I misunderstood what you said? Or perhaps I triggered this reaction from you? Either way, I held on to that hurt. For that, I'm sorry."

05) Speak it out.

It is important to verbally forgive someone who has offended you. Proverbs tells us "life and death are found in the tongue." This will bring both of you life.

"Whether intentional or not, I want you to know that I forgive you for..."

06) Choose to forgive.

It is vital to remember that forgiveness is not a feeling; it's a choice. Since you told them you would forgive them, keep your word.