

The Power of Forgiveness

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THE INSIDE RUNNING

Forgiveness is the biggest, strongest, most powerful tool in the spiritual toolbox. That's possibly why some people just can't bring themselves to use it – the devil knows how powerful it is and keeps people bound in bitterness and resentment.

Freedom comes to us through forgiveness. We no longer have to carry the heavy burden of offence toward people who have done us wrong. Holding on to these offences leads to physical sickness, mental anguish and spiritual impotence.

The remedy that Jesus has given us is to:

- Love your enemies
- Bless those who curse you
- Do good to those who persecute you

We have often seen in the media, reports of victims of serious crime forgiving their attackers. It is a witness to their faith and rising above natural emotions. They are living out John 20:23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them".

In my Dad's healing ministry, he constantly zeroed in on whether the sick person was carrying any unforgiveness as being a real barrier to healing.

If God has forgiven us our sins and given us salvation, why would we not do the same and forgive others?

With gratitude

John

John Subritzky



by Dean Letfus

"Well stuff you too!"

Now I am sure you have never had that thought or, God forbid, said it - but I confess that I have. Sometimes it's because of what someone has said or done to me, or more often it is because something has been done or said to someone I love. Just this week one of my daughters was being mistreated at work and she rang me for support. I said all the right things down the phone but in my head I was hunting down this person and chopping them into tiny little pieces.

What these thoughts remind me of is the fact that life is never standing still. We are always moving towards something or away from it. For me, moving closer to God is my highest value, so when I find vengeance and unforgiveness rising up within me I know I am about to take a step away from who I want to become unless I take some action to stop it.

If there is one thing I want you to know today about forgiveness, something that people seldom understand, it is this. Ready?

We need to forgive because it is good for us.

It keeps us mentally well. It releases us from our own poison. And it has nothing to do with the other person.

I remember vividly the evening I saw a woman come forward at an evangelistic meeting, crippled with arthritis. God spoke to the person praying for

her and asked about her sister. The woman spat out that she hated her sister and hadn't communicated with her for many decades. After some dialogue and God prompting, the woman was willing to forgive her sister and as she did so, her crippled hands relaxed completely and became totally normal. You see, unforgiveness was literally crippling her.

We think the other person needs to get with the program, but what if they are unaware of their behaviour, or even dead??

Now hang on a darn minute there fella, you're telling me that when someone hurts me, lies to me, hits me, rips me off or abuses me that they are not part of the problem and the solution? What are you smoking, Dean?

Well you see, God says some pretty direct stuff about forgiving. It is summed up in this:

If you don't forgive others God WILL NOT forgive you. Guess what happens to us if our sins aren't forgiven...?

So the problem with this forgiveness stuff is, it is so hard. People who have had charmed lives seem to so easily say, just forgive everybody. ➤





> But if all you want to do is poke someone's eyes out, forgiving them is not top of your agenda. And for many of us it is actually impossible.

I think it's helpful here to look at forgiving as a journey. I want to get to Australia but right now I am in Auckland. So to get to Oz I have to plan the trip, get some money, buy a ticket, get on a plane and eventually land in Sydney.

Forgiving is the same really. First of all you have to have a plan. Why forgive? Who to forgive? Do I really want to be free from my own bitterness and anger and hatred?

If you can say yes to that, then the next step is to be "willing to be made willing" to forgive.

So here's a little exercise for you to get you started.

Sit for a few minutes and think about the worst thing or things that have happened to you, and picture the people associated with it. You may have suppressed your feelings around this but if you focus on the people who have hurt you, you will start to feel a rush of emotions coming up attached to those memories. As soon as you have one particular situation or person, write their name down and some code word that helps you remember the situation.

You've just booked your flight, now to get the funds together.

I have found over 30 years that the more specific people can be, the more they are able to forgive. So write down what happened, how you felt. What you wished was different etc. If you're going to be brave enough to forgive someone, it really, really helps to know exactly what you are forgiving them for.

For example, "I forgive Joe Bloggs for being such a complete jerk" is not much help to you. The enemy can come along and remind you of when Joe stole your girlfriend and all that hatred will come rushing straight back.

Instead, be more precise. For example -

"I forgive Joe Bloggs for stealing my girlfriend. For lying to me about it. For making me feel like less of a man than he is. For ridiculing me to our friends and for not protecting me. For disregarding my feelings and being such a scum bag. For pretending to be trustworthy and pretending to be my best mate."

Now when your memories come to attack you it is easy to remind

yourself that you have forgiven that specific thing and move on.

Get the picture?

Once you deal with forgiving others the next person you need to start forgiving is yourself. Think for a minute of the worst thing you've ever done or said. Do you feel completely free from it? If not then spend some time writing down anything you've done that you need to be forgiven for, by you!

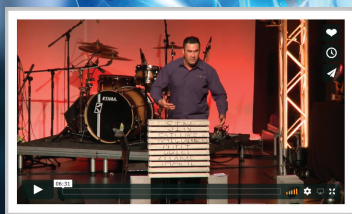
You see, your past tends to bleed into your present and you experience it as if it is happening now. If you have shame around something you did and it is unforgiven, you will react out of shame in current situations. We can only follow the Apostle Paul's call to forget those things which are behind, and reach forth to those things which are ahead if we actually want to put the past to bed permanently.

And that, my brothers, is impossible without forgiving. We can learn to forgive quickly and easily, but it can be a real journey for many of us who are wounded and hurt.

Begin today with one person, one situation, one wound healed.

"FORGET THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, AND REACH FORTH TO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE AHEAD"

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