



Making It Personal

Have you ever found yourself making (or thinking) any of the following statements?

1. "There's no unforgiveness in my heart."

If you have truly forgiven every person who has ever sinned against you, then you are able to experience the great freedom, joy, peace, and blessing that result from being a forgiven, forgiving child of God. However, it is possible to live with unforgiveness for so long that we become blinded to its presence in our lives.

Put a check next to any of the following hurts you have experienced:

- Lied to
- Rejected by parents
- Promise(s) broken
- Stolen from
- Neglected by grown children
- Cheated in a business/financial deal
- Violent crime against self or a loved one
- Rebellious/wayward son or daughter
- Treated unfairly by an employer
- Belittled
- Parents divorced
- Alcoholic parent or mate
- Slandered/falsely accused
- Abandoned by parent or mate
- Divorced by mate
- Publicly humiliated
- Adultery or other sin against you
- Abused (physically, emotionally, sexually)

As you reflect on the ways you have been sinned against, do you find any of these statements true?

- Every time I think of (person or offense), I still feel angry.
- I have a subtle, secret desire to see (person) pay for what they did to me.
- I wouldn't mind if something bad happened to the person(s) who hurt me.
- I sometimes find myself telling others how (person) hurt me.
- If (person's) name comes up, I am more likely to say something negative about them than something positive.
- I cannot thank God for (person).

These statements are an indication that we have not fully forgiven all those who have sinned against us.

REMEMBER: Forgiveness means that I fully release the offender from his debt. It means fully clearing his record. It is a promise never to bring up the offense against him again (to God, to others, or to the offender himself).

God's Word says that if we say we have not sinned, even though His Spirit shows us otherwise, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). Have you deceived yourself into believing that you have forgiven everyone who has sinned against you? As God examines your heart, does He find any unforgiveness there?

2. “I could never forgive (person) for (offense). They have hurt me too deeply.”

What are some of the hurts Jesus suffered from us?

Isaiah 53:3-7

Psalm 22:6-7, 16

How has God dealt with us who have sinned against Him so greatly?

Ephesians 2:4-5

Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 10:17

Micah 7:18-19

How did Jesus command us to respond to those who wrong us?

Luke 6:27

Romans 12:17-21

Colossians 3:13

Luke 17:3-4

According to Colossians 3:13, what should be the measure (the standard) of our forgiveness?

On that basis, what offense is too great to forgive?

When God commands us to do something, He always enables us to do it. How are we enabled to forgive (Philippians 2:13)?

3. “They don’t deserve to be forgiven.”

What did we do to deserve God’s forgiveness?

Romans 5:8

Ephesians 2:4-9

What are the reasons we should extend forgiveness to those who sin against us?

- The offender is genuinely sorry for what he has done.
- I have been forgiven an infinite debt by God, so I forgive as I have been forgiven.
- God commands me to forgive.
- The offender promises never to do it again.
- The offense was an “understandable mistake.”

Would I be willing for God to deal with me in the same way that I want to see my offender dealt with?

4. “If I forgive them, they’re off the hook!”

We may feel that if we forgive another, justice will not be served—they’ll get off scot-free. The problem is, we have put ourselves in the position of a “bill collector.” What does Romans 12:19 have to say about “bill collecting”?

REMEMBER: Letting the offender off of your hook does not mean they are off of God’s hook. Forgiveness involves transferring the prisoner over to the One who is able and responsible to mete out justice. It relieves us of the burden and responsibility to hold them in prison ourselves.

5. “I’ve forgiven them, but I’ll never be able to forget what they did to me.”

According to the Scriptures, when God forgives us, what does He promise to do?

Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17

Psalm 103:12

REMEMBER: Forgiveness is *not* forgetting. It is a transaction in which I release my debtor from the obligation to repay his debt.

An omniscient God cannot forget, in the sense of being unable to recall something. But He does promise not to *remember* our sins, not to hold them against us. God does not ask us to forget the wrong that has been done to us, but to forgive it.

6. “I really have forgiven, but I still struggle with feelings of hurt.”

According to the following passages, what must we be willing to do, in addition to forgiving those who sin against us?

Luke 6:27-31

Romans 12:17-21

REMEMBER: The act of forgiveness is only the starting place for dealing with those who wrong us. The initial act of releasing the offender must be followed by a commitment to invest positively in their life. This investment is the key to experiencing emotional healing and wholeness.

Whenever possible, we should seek to rebuild the relationship between ourselves and the offender. In situations where this is not possible or appropriate, we can still invest in their lives through prayer.

What are several practical ways that you could return good for evil, or invest in the life of someone who has wronged you?

7. “I won’t forgive!”

Ultimately, forgiveness comes down to a choice. It is a choice that God both commands and enables. But some simply refuse to make that choice. According to the following Scriptures, what can we expect if we refuse to forgive those who sin against us, and what does a bitter spirit reveal about our spiritual condition?

Matthew 6:14-15

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

Matthew 18:32-35

Choosing to Forgive

If God has revealed any lack of forgiveness in your heart, turn back to “Moving from Bitterness to Forgiveness” (page 6) and prayerfully complete the five steps to freedom.