



Rapha's Step Studies for Overcoming Sexual Addiction

STEP 8

**We make a list of all persons we have harmed,
and become willing to make amends to them all.**

*And just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way.
Luke 6:31*

FORGIVENESS

As we mentioned earlier, one of the benefits we experienced in Step 5 was acceptance. Once we have gained someone else's acceptance, it is easier to accept and forgive other people. In fact, our ability to extend grace and forgiveness is directly proportional to the degree we have personally experienced it ourselves.

Unfortunately, many of us continue to harbor feelings of ill will toward one or more people—including ourselves—even after we have experienced the forgiveness of God and other people.

Are there people you don't like to be around?...or whom you can't look in the eye?...or with whom you get angry every time you even think of them?

1. Read Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12-13
 - To what degree are we to forgive others?

 - Describe how God has forgiven you:



Being offended by others is a frequent experience in life. We go through periods when it seems that almost everybody is letting us down. We want freedom from being offended but the beat goes on. We are hurt by both our experience of the offense and our reliving of it. In fact, the initial pain of the wrong usually amounts to only a small fraction of the total hurt. After a while, it should become obvious to us that it is impossible to avoid being offended. However, the majority of our pain can be avoided if we will learn to deal with offenses rather than reliving them countless times. Unforgiveness is a sure way to cut the flow of God's power in our lives. In fact, there are a number of negative consequences which often result from failing to forgive others. Before we examine these, let's look at some of the reasons why we may withhold forgiveness:

REASONS FOR NOT FORGIVING

We often fail to forgive others (and ourselves) because we don't think it's possible. We forget how God has graciously forgiven all of our sins through Christ's death, and rationalize why we can't forgive. These are some of the countless excuses we make for our unwillingness to forgive ourselves and others.

RESULTS OF NOT FORGIVING

- **Stress:** Living with the high level of tension brought by an unforgiving attitude in a relationship can result in a weakening of one's mental resources, emotional difficulties, physical exhaustion, and in some cases, illness.
- **No More Love:** "I don't know if I can ever love someone again" is a frequent complaint from those offended by a lover. Our deepest hurts come from those we love. One way we deal with the pain of being offended is simply to withdraw, refusing to love anymore. We often make this unconscious decision when we have not adequately dealt with an offense. We may desperately want to love again, but feel that we are incapable of it. Refusing to experience love and feeling unable to love are both devastating conditions.
- **Bitterness:** Emotions trace their lines on our faces. We think others don't notice what's going on inside, but our anger can be detected by even the casual observer. One person recalled seeing a neighbor go through difficulties in her marriage. Hate created such an impression on her that her face became snarled. She still has an ugly look on her face. Unforgiveness produces ugliness of all sorts.



- **Perpetual Conflict:** A couple, both of whom had been previously married, received counseling several years ago. Having been hurt in their first marriage, they anticipated hurt from their present spouse. At the smallest offense they would each react as if their spouse were about to deliver the final blow. They were constantly on the defensive, protecting themselves from the attacks they imagined their mate would deliver. Having been offended in the past, they anticipated more hurt in the present and future, and reacted in a way that perpetuated the conflict.
- **Walls That Keep Others Out:** Strangely, many of us refuse the love that others want to give us. We often may become anxious and threatened when personal intimacy becomes possible.
 1. *The offense was too great.*
 2. *He(he) won't accept responsibility for the offense.*
 3. *He(he) isn't truly sorry.*
 4. *He(he) never asked to be forgiven.*
 5. *He(he) will do it again.*
 6. *He(he) did it again.*
 7. *I don't like him(her).*
 8. *He(he) did it deliberately.*
 9. *If I forgive the offense, I'll have to treat the offender well.*
 10. *Someone has to punish him(her).*
 11. *Something keeps me from forgiving.*
 12. *I'll be a hypocrite if I forgive, because I don't feel like forgiving.*
 13. *I'll forgive, but I won't ever forget.*
 14. *I'll have forgiven a lesser offense, after excusing the real offense.*

The exercise on the following pages will help you to recognize any lack of forgiveness in your life and to extend forgiveness to others as God in Christ has forgiven you.

- **Offense:** Describe in some detail an event which caused you pain.
- **Persons to Be Forgiven:** List everyone who participated in the offense.
- **Reasons for Not Forgiving:** Go through the summary of reasons for not forgiving. Which ones apply?
- **Act of Forgiving:** Choose to forgive, remembering the complete forgiveness you have in Christ.
- At the conclusion of the exercise, use the prayer as an exercise of faith for each offense.



OFFENSE	PERSONS TO BE FORGIVEN	REASONS FOR UNFORGIVENESS	DATE
Example: My brothers never had anything to do with me	Harry, Frank	The offense was too great; they didn't agree with me; they never asked me to be for- given; they'll do it again.	4-28-89

OFFENSE	PERSONS TO BE FORGIVEN	REASONS FOR UNFORGIVENESS	DATE

Dear Lord,

I forgive _____ for _____
(offense) on the basis that God has freely forgiven me and commanded me to forgive others. I have the capacity to do this because Christ has completely forgiven me. I do not excuse this person's offense in any way, nor do I use any excuse for not extending forgiveness. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for enabling me to forgive him (her).

I also confess that I have sinned by using the following excuses for not forgiving:



RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

Having examined the importance of forgiving others, we must now ask, *What have I done to others that merits my seeking their forgiveness?* Step 4 has well prepared us for this step by enabling us to see what we've done wrong. Now we need to know whom we have wronged.

We are not yet ready to make amends with these people. Our task here is simply to list their names. In preparing this list, it may be helpful to use these guidelines, referring often to Step 4:

- From whom did we cheat or steal?
- What promises and/or confidences did we conceal our immoral sexual behavior?
- For whom did we cause pain by missing family obligations (birthdays, anniversaries) or other special days or commitments?
- What social responsibilities (laws, commitments) did we break or avoid, and who was harmed by this?
- What financial obligations did we avoid or wrongly create, and who was harmed or inconvenienced by our behavior?
- What have we done to harm those with whom we've worked?
- To whom have we neglected to show gratitude?
- Who was victimized by our anger, resentment, blame, fear, or sexual behavior?

Persons We Have Planned	How We Harmed Them



MOTIVATIONS FOR MAKING AMENDS

There are many benefits we will receive from reconciling ourselves to others by making our amends with them. For one thing, it will release us from the control these people currently have on us. Think about those persons you have been avoiding; those you've been dodging, hoping they won't see you, or those you've been excluding from your circle of friends altogether. Have you ever considered that your guilt and fear are controls which are keeping you from the full enjoyment of life and love God desires for all who know Him?

To make amends is to be released from our relational past. It releases us from the fear of someone finding out something about us that we don't want them to know, a fear that will haunt and control us for the rest of our lives if unconfessed.

Making amends will enable us to enjoy increased fellowship with others; a key factor in our continued recovery. Isolation compelled us to continue drinking or using. Restitution frees us from that bondage.

Finally, as we take action to forgive others and experience their forgiveness, we will be able to forgive ourselves more completely. We will better understand that while our behavior may have been shameful, we as persons are not worthless. Learning how to love and forgive ourselves is a prerequisite for genuinely loving and forgiving others.

1. What do you fear most about making amends?
 - Do you think this is a realistic fear? Why, or why not?
2. What possible joys might result from making amends?

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