



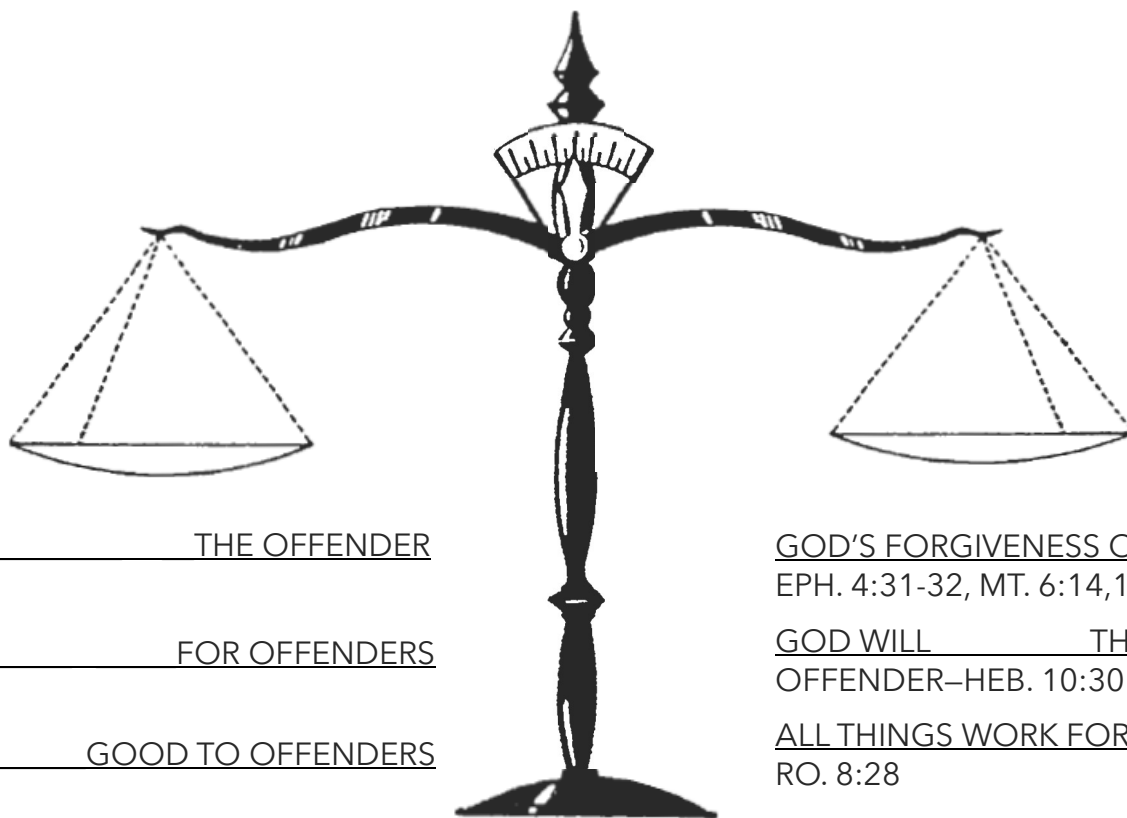
Developing a Forgiving Spirit

EVIDENCES OF BITTERNESS

| Attitudes Which May Reflect Bitterness | Amplification And Insights |
|--|---|
| • DEPRESSION | His bitterness uses up his emotional energy and then he tends to become depressed. This is illustrated in Jonah 4. |
| • MISTRUST | He is fearful of being hurt again so he is cautious in trusting those around him. This is illustrated in Judges 11. |
| • CRITICISM | If he is hurt by one in authority his bitterness causes him to be critical of all that his offender stands for, yet he is incapable of helping his offender improve. (Matthew 7:1-5) |
| • INSENSITIVITY | He is insensitive to the needs and feelings of those around him because he has built up a wall to protect himself, resulting in others treating him the way he treats his offender. (Matthew 7:2) |
| • PRIDE | His pride is at its height as he seeks to exalt himself, as well as get revenge on his offender. This focus makes him incapable of serving others. (Matthew 23:11) |
| • TENSION | His muscles become tense and stiff whenever he thinks about those who hurt him. This tension and accompanying stubbornness produce the term, "stiff-necked". (Exodus 32:9, Jeremiah 17:23, Acts 7:51, etc.) |
| • UNGRATEFULNESS | He looks at the good things that happen to him as compensation for the hurts he has suffered. He feels these are owed to him. (II Timothy 3:2) |
| • FLATTERY | He looks at the good things that happen to him as compensation for the hurts he has suffered. He feels these are owed to him. (II Timothy 3:2) |
| • OBSESSION FOR REVENGE | His desire to get revenge continues to grow and he takes every opportunity to hurt the one who offended him through gossip, slander, physical attacks, etc. |



BALANCING TRUTHS IN THE PRINCIPLE OF FORGIVENESS



THE OFFENDER

FOR OFFENDERS

GOOD TO OFFENDERS

GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF
EPH. 4:31-32, MT. 6:14,15

GOD WILL _____ THE
OFFENDER—HEB. 10:30

ALL THINGS WORK FOR
RO. 8:28

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO SUFFER
WHY?

OF YOUR OWN LIFE

I PETER 4:1,2
MATT. 18:21,22

TO _____ THE OFFENDER
I PETER 2:21-25

TO BUILD _____ IN YOU
JAMES 1:2,3

TO BRING GOD _____ BY YOUR
TESTIMONY – I PETER 4:12-14



6 BASIC ASPECTS OF FORGIVENESS

- Forgiveness deals with our emotional response toward an offender. Pardon deals with the consequences of his offense. Unless we have the authority we may not be able to pardon an offense, but we can always forgive.
- Forgiving a person is "clearing his record" with us and transferring the responsibility for any punishment to God. Forgiveness will make it possible for us to have the same openness toward him after he offends us as we had before he offended us.
- The following insights assist us in looking at forgiveness from God's point of view:

1. Forgiveness involves a _____ attitude toward the offense rather than a _____ attitude toward the offender

If our initial focus after being offended is on the offender, it is difficult not to become bitter. But if we first focus on the offense and forget for the moment who offended us, we are much better able to look at the offense as a significant aspect of our personal character development. Our proper attitudes as a result of the offense become the important concern. By using this approach, both the offender and the offense fade into insignificance and our response to the offense becomes the major concern.

2. Forgiveness views the offender as an " _____ " in God's hand

In the final analysis, it is God who uses even the "wrath of man to praise Him." Psalm 76:10 King David could have become very bitter toward the vile, hateful person who tried to humiliate him by publicly accusing him and cursing him. Instead, he viewed him simply as an agent of a higher power. He said, "The Lord hath bidden him (to curse me)." II Samuel 16: 11

Jesus Christ could have become bitter toward those who beat Him and nailed Him to the cross, but He looked at them as carrying out the purpose of God for His life. Because of this, He was able to say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

3. Forgiveness looks at the wounds of the offense as God's way of drawing attention to the offender's _____

When the girl possessed of the devil continually disrupted Paul's meetings, he could have become bitter at her disturbances. Her offenses toward his ministry, however, caused him to become keenly aware of her spiritual needs and as a result he healed her. Acts 16:16-18



4. Forgiveness recognizes that bitterness is assuming a _____ we don't have

Only God has the right to punish. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Romans 12:19 A response of bitterness is an instinctive means of revenge toward the one who has offended us. Most of us are prone to use silence toward the offender as a means of punishing that person. (See also Romans 12:17-20)

5. Forgiveness realizes that the offender has already begun receiving the _____ of his offenses

A person's happiness is dependent upon his harmony with God and others. An offense toward us simply indicates that he is violating one or more principles and these violations will have a deep effect upon his own happiness and success. If he has wronged us, we can be sure that he is also insensitive toward others around him and is or will suffer from conflicts with them as well,

The reproofs of conscience, friends, circumstances, etc. are sufficient tools of God to emphasize to him his offenses. When he recognizes the seriousness of his offenses, he will not give us the privilege of helping him if we have not reflected a loving spirit toward him through our attitudes.

6. Forgiveness involves cooperating with _____ in the offender's life

When someone intentionally offends us, we can be sure that he is going to be fully aware of our responses to him. In this case, we have a significant opportunity to demonstrate the potential forgiveness of God to him. As he sees our openness and love to him, he will be able to comprehend the same openness and love that God has toward him, in spite of his offenses toward God.

When someone unintentionally offends us, it indicates that the offender has personal deficiencies which he may not be aware of. In this case, our continued openness toward him may provide the opportunity to be of personal help to him in the areas revealed by his offenses.

The reward of meeting his needs will be a spirit of joy in us as we see him sharing with others the same attitudes he saw in us when we properly responded to his offenses.

Forgiveness is having a greater concern for a person after he offends me than I did before he offended me. It is using the hurts of others as the basis of demonstrating Christ's love back to them.



HOW TO DEVELOP A SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

- A spirit of forgiveness is having a greater desire to help someone after he offends us than we had before he offended us.

1. Visualize all those who have deeply hurt or offended you

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Step-Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Authorities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brothers/Sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparents | <input type="checkbox"/> Sons/Daughters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employers | <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associates | <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbors | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Leaders |

List those who have offended you

| Offenders | How they have offended me |
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**2. Realize that God _____
the actions of your offender**

As long as we think that the one who hurts us is acting independently, we can hardly help growing bitter. But as long as we realize that God "raised him up" for a specific purpose in our lives, we will be able to gain a forgiving spirit. They may think evil against us, but God means it for good. (Genesis 50:20) "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." (Psalm 76:10)

**3. _____ God for the benefit he
plans through each offence**

God's command to give thanks in all things is especially essential at this point. (I Thessalonians 5:18) We don't have to be thankful in order to thank God. Thanking God is an act of the will. Being thankful is an act of the emotions.

When our lives are dedicated to God, He puts a protective wall around us so that nothing can touch us except that which God permits. He permits it for a purpose, and this purpose is for our ultimate joy and reward. It is for this reason we can thank God for each offense.

4. Recall the failures for which God should judge you

- ☐ Ungratefulness
- ☐ Strong will
- ☐ Getting angry at
- ☐ Speaking harshly to
- ☐ Criticizing
- ☐ Lying and deceiving
- ☐ Disobeying
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

**5. Discern what _____ qualities God want
to develop in me through the offense**

When we wrongly react to an offender, we are revealing various lacks of character which need to be developed such as, love, meekness, patience, faith, gentleness, self-control, etc. Even if we respond correctly to an offender, other qualities will have to be strengthened such as joy, peace, godliness, etc.



6. Fully forgive your offenders

| Offenders | Date Forgiven | Treasures I can voluntarily invest |
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Possible ways to benefit your offender:

CAN I...

- ☐ Pray for him
- ☐ Be friendly toward him
- ☐ Praise his positive qualities
- ☐ Defend him to others
- ☐ Express any appreciation to him
- ☐ Remove any pressure from him
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

7. Expect to _____ for doing right as a normal part of Christian living

Many of us have the mistaken idea that if we are a Christian we won't have to suffer, yet the Scripture clearly states, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29) "Yea. and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Timothy 3:12) "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him." (II Timothy 2:12)



BASIC CHAPTER IN MY LIFE MESSAGE

How I Developed a Spirit of Forgiveness

- A.** Inward and outward evidences of bitterness
- B.** Basic insights which enabled me to develop a spirit of forgiveness
- C.** Specific commitments I made in developing a spirit of forgiveness
- D.** What has happened since development a spirit of forgiveness