

R. T. Kendall: 10 Things at Stake if You Don't Forgive Yourself

Have you ever felt guilty at the thought of totally forgiving yourself? I have.

The idea is this. What I have done is so horrible that I do not deserve to be set free from guilt. It would be irresponsible to forgive myself totally and not look back. I must pay for my failure. I must see that I get justice.

The same is true in forgiving others. We are afraid they will not get justice. To forgive them sets them free and therefore means they may not get punished. When my friend Josif Tson said to me, "R.T., you must totally forgive them," I was not happy. But I knew he was right. I took his advice and was set free with a peace I had forgotten about.

I have to tell you, I went back and forth, back and forth, for months. The peace would come and go in direct proportion to my attitude toward those who had hurt Louise and me.

I'm sorry it took a while, but I came to a conclusion: The peace is better! The way forward is to set such a high value on the peace you get from total forgiveness that you prefer the peace more than their being punished.

Before we proceed, I must further clarify what the implications are when we totally forgive ourselves. It is not only letting ourselves off the hook but also setting ourselves free from any sense of punishment. This includes accepting ourselves as we are and never looking back. It is letting the past be past.

Here are 10 reasons why you should forgive yourself:

1. It is precisely what God wants us to do. This is what many of us have difficulty believing, but it is a sin against God not to forgive ourselves (see Eph. 4:31-32).

2. Satan does not want us to forgive ourselves. I believe that one of the ways to know the will of God is to imagine what the devil would want us to do-then do the opposite.

3. You will have inner peace and freedom from the bondage of guilt. There is nothing to compare with the peace and freedom that comes from total forgiveness. Are you weighed down with guilt over the past? It does not need to last.

4. The degree to which you forgive yourself may directly relate to your usefulness. I can tell you that totally forgiving myself and forgiving others have been a lifeline to the anointing of the Spirit.

5. Totally forgiving yourself will help you love people more. People who do not totally forgive those who hurt them often do not like themselves. It is not surprising, then, that they struggle with liking people.

6. People will like you more when you have forgiven yourself. Not forgiving yourself is an exhibition of the wrong kind of self-love. Self-love is preoccupation with your personal desires; loving yourself is respecting yourself as God intends.

7. It will enable you to fulfill all God has in mind for you and thus keep you from being paralyzed by the past. When you truly believe you are forgiven and you have totally forgiven yourself, it shows. People will want what you have.

8. Your own physical health can be at stake. It has been proven by medical research that holding a grudge can injure your health. Not forgiving yourself is bad for your health, too. This is because you are holding a grudge against yourself!

9. Your mental and emotional health is at stake. The main problem all counselors face-whether their clients have religious backgrounds or not-is that of guilt. It pleases God for His people to have good mental health. Forgiving ourselves is a good place to start.

10. You should forgive yourself because your spiritual state is at stake. There is an inseparable connection between our spiritual health and a good relationship with the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 4:30). Forgiving ourselves helps ensure that the anointing is on us; not doing so means that we forfeit a measure of His presence.

Totally forgiving ourselves is not merely an option; we have a command from God to do this. With this mandate accepted by us, God can use us to exceed all we ever dreamed of. If God can forgive and use a man who knew Jesus as Peter did and who fell pitifully and horribly, He can use you and me. Peter had Jesus' prayers behind him. So do we. Jesus' prayers for Peter enabled him to forgive himself. His prayer will do that for you, too.

Adapted from *How to Forgive Ourselves Totally* by R.T. Kendall, copyright 2007, published by Charisma House.