

Escape the Unforgiveness Prison

by Michelle McKinney Hammond

In order to embrace the One who comes with healing arms to comfort us, we must first extricate ourselves from the offense. We will never forget the experience, but we must choose to understand (this does not mean justify) and forgive the one who has wronged us. If we allow ourselves to become prisoners of unforgiveness and bitterness, we are sentenced to live a life of seclusion, self-loathing and hopelessness.

How do you begin to forgive someone who has hurt you? Do you begin sifting through your pain to find the one grain of rationale that could excuse the other person's behavior? Sometimes there is none. What does one do then?

We have all heard that hurt people hurt other people, and this is a fact that is resoundingly true. It must also be noted that if someone truly loves you, they would never seek to hurt you on purpose. Yet, loved ones do offend, they do jolt us emotionally, shock us, dismay us and sometimes even violate us through shattering the things that are nearest and dearest to our hearts.

Your body, your mind and even your self-esteem can be dealt a blow from which you feel you will never recover, but recovery is just a choice away.

The gift of free will that God gave to us is more powerful than we know. Many of us have not exercised the greatest reaches of its capacity to bounce back, overcome and even forgive. Forgive even when you are right and the other person is wrong.

The truth is that forgiveness has nothing to do with who is right or wrong. Forgiveness is a free agent. It is not attached to reason or agreement or even understanding. It is however attached to wholeness and to your healing and liberation.

Unforgiveness is a prison. It slams the door on new beginnings and entrenches you in your present pain. It chains the heart and stops it from beating. It suffocates joy and paralyzes your ability to move on. Unforgiveness is the cancer of the soul. It slowly eats away the marrow of your existence and impairs your judgment, your personality and your ability to love again.

The desire to want to hurt the person who hurt you can be overwhelming. We want them to feel the torture we think they deserve. "How can he act as though nothing ever happened?" We ask. "It's not fair! Where is God in all this? Is there no justice!"

Yes, there is justice. But justice comes only after we have released our offender into the hands of the One who is solely in the position to judge.