

Forgiveness Begins in the Heart

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God. **-1 John 3:21**

Total forgiveness must take place in the heart or it is worthless. If forgiveness truly takes place in the heart, one does not need to know whether one's enemy will reconcile. If I have forgiven him in my heart of hearts, but he still doesn't want to speak to me, I can still have the inner victory. It may be far easier to forgive when we know that those who maligned or betrayed us are sorry for what they did, but if I must have this knowledge before I can forgive, I may never have the victory over my bitterness.

If Jesus had waited until His enemies felt some guilt or shame for their words and actions, He would never have forgiven them.

It is my experience that most people we must forgive do not believe they have done anything wrong at all, or if they know that they did something wrong, they believe it was justified. I would even go so far as to say that at least 90 percent of all the people I've had to forgive would be indignant at the thought that they had done something wrong.

Total forgiveness, therefore, must take place in the heart. If I have a genuine heart experience, I will not be devastated if there is no reconciliation. If those who hurt me don't want to continue a relationship with me, it isn't my problem because I have forgiven them. This is also why a person can achieve inner peace even when forgiving someone who has died.

Confidence toward God is ultimately what total forgiveness is all about; He is the one I want to please at the end of the day. He cares and knows whether I have truly and totally

forgiven, and when I know I have His love and approval, I am one very happy and contented servant of Christ.

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