

Forgiving Others: A Command With a Promise

Forgiving others is an important step on our Spirit-led transformation journey. It's actually a command from God with a promise. The promise is that He forgives us. The command is for us to do the same for others. An outcome of forgiving others and being forgiven is that it frees us to enjoy God's peace.

Most of the time, forgiving others feels like a really hard thing to do, so we just put it in the back of our minds and leave it there. We have a problem with forgiving someone who has done us wrong because we want them to be brought to justice or to be hurt like we have been hurt.

However, we aren't bringing them to justice or hurting them by not forgiving them. We are only hurting ourselves. It does us no good to hang on to the wrongs someone did to us. It's only keeping us farther away from God because He clearly says we must forgive others, or He won't forgive us.

Some Things Are Hard to Forgive

When I was 11, something huge happened to me. It was so big in my mind that I didn't even consider forgiveness as an option. I was molested by an older man who was friend of our family. It happened in what I considered the safest place in the world—my grandparents' house.

For years I carried fear, disgust and anger for this man in silence. Food became a way to comfort myself and make me feel at peace when my mind would rage. I could forget all about him—for a while. It was also a way to protect myself by being OK with being larger. I felt that way no other men would want to hurt me. I reasoned if a man really cared for me in the right way, he wouldn't be put off if I had a few extra pounds

on my body.

Until I understood the power of forgiveness, I was bound by my abuser's control over my mind. I was afraid of any man who looked at me or said something to me that was complimentary. I was suspicious of any men except those I knew and trusted.

Self-Protection Doesn't Work

One day I got on an elevator at the denominational headquarters where I was working. I had hit a milestone and had lost 100 pounds! I was elated. I got on the elevator with a man who was a department director. He was headed to my same floor.

The doors closed. He looked me up and down and said, "You're looking really good."

I froze. I was back in that bedroom in the second story of my grandparents' house.

I didn't hear a word he said after that, but I think he invited me to have dinner with him. All I could think about was getting off the elevator as fast as possible. I don't know if he was coming on to me or not, but I wasn't taking any chances.

That was the day I intentionally started eating sugar again and putting the weight back on that I'd lost, plus more. I didn't want to take the chance that my new look would garner the same response from some other man.

Forgiving My Abuser

Living in suspicion of every man I didn't know was no way to live. I didn't know what to do, though, because many other girls and women had had more difficult experiences than me.

Nothing in life happens by chance, so being at a Joyce Meyer conference when she told her story of being continually

assaulted by her father was no accident.

After telling her story, she added that abuse can happen in many different ways. Even if it has instilled fear and repulsion for a person in your life, you are still obligated to forgive them—even if they are not still alive—because it will release the control they have over you. It will put the justice in God’s hands rather than yours.

I knew this was what I had to do. I knew my abuser still had control over my mind and emotions. I forgave my abuser that day, even though he was already dead. I simply prayed to God: *I choose to forgive this man for what he did to me and the fear it caused me. I hand this to You and ask You to do justice in this situation. I accept Your peace back into my life.*

What joy! What freedom! What release!

Forgiving Others Is a Process

Forgiving others is a process we go through to disentangle or release ourselves from others who have hurt us. Then we can allow God take care of us and them.

It’s the reason Jesus tells us in Luke 6:37 to “forgive, and you shall be forgiven.” It’s the reason Paul reiterates that in Colossians 3:13 (NLT), “Forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

God wants us to demonstrate His principles of forgiveness in our personal lives and interactions with others. We want retribution, but He asks that we show mercy and leave everything else up to Him.

Why Should We Forgive Others?

- Because God forgave us.
- Because God asks us to forgive others.

- To demonstrate God's forgiveness to the world.
- Because God is the only one who can judge.
- It releases us from that person's control over us.
- It is the only way for us to be at peace.

When we hold things against someone, we don't realize how that affects everything in our lives. We rehearse the scene over and over again. Our minds and our emotions won't let us forget, so we are stuck in the never-ending reality horror story. Only forgiveness releases us.

The same thing happens if we were yelled at by a parent, teased by a sibling or felt unloved shamed, demeaned, jolted, snubbed, abandoned, called worthless, stupid, ugly, a know-it-all, not part of the family or any other number of things we go through as children.

Uncovering Root Issues

Almost every feeling that comes up in us today can be traced back to someone who made us feel that way. Maybe we didn't even know that we could forgive them for that, release them to God and allow God's peace to flood our souls.

We aren't saying what this person did was right. We are just releasing them to God and from having power over us. We don't even have to say it to their face. We can just tell God specifically what we forgive them for and release them to Him.

We carry emotional hurts from childhood into adulthood. We think we've buried them, but they can still plague us unless we go through the forgiveness process. The beautiful part of this is it leads to experiencing God's truth as He reassures us of how He wants to work in our lives.

It All Starts With Forgiveness

Being willing to forgive others is where it all starts! Who knew that the power of forgiveness could set us free in such profound ways?

Identifying hurts done against me that I haven't forgiven and then forgiving the perpetrators has helped me work through many strongholds that found their roots in my childhood. You can do the same.

What would your life be like if you could dig deep to discover what really is holding you back? Maybe it's something you've buried so deep you don't even know that's what's keeping your life in a depressing spin cycle.

Whatever it is, God wants to use His not-so-secret weapon of forgiving others to set you free and demonstrate His forgiveness to the world at the same time.

Action steps and challenges for this lesson and others in the Spirit-Led Transformation series can be found in Overcomers Christian Weight Loss Academy. For more on this topic, listen to this episode of *Sweet Grace for Your Journey* on Charisma Podcast Network, *Why Forgive Others?*

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