

How to Break Free From the Prison of Unforgiveness

Forgiveness could be considered selfish on our part, but it is a good kind of selfish, one that God condones. It is akin to loving ourselves. There's really nothing in forgiveness for the person who wronged us or did something that hurt us. They don't care if we forgive them or not. For us, though, the advantages of forgiveness are life-changingly huge!

What is Forgiveness?

When I think of forgiveness I often think of the Joyce Meyer quote that says something like, "Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."

And here's my definition. Forgiveness is like drinking the best cold, clear, pure water and allowing God to restore us and wash us.

I was talking with a coaching client last night who grew up in a very dysfunctional alcoholic family. With that came a very open view of sexuality that was imposed on her as a child from as far back as she remembers.

As we've been coaching together she's done a great job of forgiving her family members and beginning to renounce lies that set up in her and then understanding God's truth in the situation.

In a way, she had excused their behaviors, because as adults, they changed somewhat.. However, what she began to see was that the little child in her was still hurt and broken and was still running her life emotionally.

How Bondage Begins

When she got older, she became an alcoholic herself. She also

became addicted to sex, food and anything she couldn't say no to.

Then she began to see how her childhood was affecting everything in her life. She was introduced to Jesus and received His forgiveness for everything she had done. For the first time, she felt clean and restored.

Then she learned that Jesus asks us to forgive others. How can she forgive those who exposed her to everything that went wrong in her life? How is that even possible?

Blame Keeps Us in Unforgiveness

It's very natural to place blame for our lives on those who brought us up in dysfunction or to those who betrayed us or intentionally harmed us when we were adults. But hanging on to the hurts only brings us more hurt and sends us back down the roads we no longer want to travel.

In order to put aside the things that became embedded in us as children, we must forgive those who harmed, betrayed or introduced us to things that wreaked havoc in our lives. I don't mean we must go to them and forgive them. We must settle it in our mind that we are no longer going to let the past govern our future.

How to Forgive

We simply say out loud to God, "I forgive the person who harmed me. I no longer want this to rule my life. I hand back to them all the issues they gave to me and take back from them all of what is truly mine washed through the blood of the Lamb."

What you want back might include things like your innocence, your happiness, your peace, your ability to love and your ability to follow Jesus with everything that is in you.

Then, ask God to restore you to His original design before

that person, situation or relationship came into your life. Simply say, "Dear Jesus, wash me clean. Restore me to how You made me. Help me learn from this situation, but never again wallow in it or let it define me. Set me free to follow You. I am Yours."

Forgiveness Sets You Free

Forgiveness is not for the person you are forgiving. It is for you, so you are no longer ruled or defined by it. Holding onto the anger for what others have done to you or those you love only puts you in bondage, which is where the offender may want you to stay.

Don't allow them to have the ability to ruin your life. Holding a grudge does not hurt the other person. It only hurts you. The feeling that you want to get them back will define everything you do from now on.

Vengeance is not yours. It is God's. We will not see the outcome until we finally go home. Be assured, though, God tells us in Matthew 6:15 if we refuse to forgive others, God will not forgive our sins.

We may feel that we have not done anything as bad as what someone did to us. While that may be true in our human estimation, in God's economy all sin is the same. A little white lie is the same as a huge betrayal.

Be Selfish

My advice: Be selfish. Forgive others so you will be forgiven and set free to follow your God-given destiny.

The friend I was talking about earlier has learned this truth. Every day, God reveals more of the issues that are holding her back. Many times, I am the one who gets to help lead her to uncover another issue that is hiding just below the surface.

I can tell you that is my greatest privilege. I always love to

watch as God works in another's life. I'm always amazed at what He does, what He says and how He reveals Himself to that person.

Her greatest desire is to serve God. I'm sure it's yours too. I know it's mine. To step into that destiny God has for us, we must begin with forgiveness. My friend is working on uncovering all the entangled roots that have been holding her to an addictive lifestyle.

Forgiveness Brings Freedom

She is discovering the truth that says, "Let me be clear, Christ has set us free, not partially, but completely and wonderfully free. Let us always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back to the bondage of our past.

It's important on our journey to be stubborn in that refusal, but not be stubborn in what God wants us to do. We need to readily recognize what God wants from us and quickly respond. Be quick to do what God tells you to do. If it is to forgive someone, do that. {eoa}

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