

Jentezen Franklin: 4 Keys to Keep the Poison of Unforgiveness From Taking Over Your Life

It's no secret that those who are closest to us can wound us the most profoundly. Betrayal can build walls around our hearts to protect us from the heartache, but it's those same walls that keep us from receiving healing and having trusting relationships. In fact, it can make us less loving in general. Who wants that?

In moments of unthinkable betrayal and hurt, how are we supposed to respond? How do we free ourselves from the entanglement of the toxic stress and emotions that are devastating our bodies? There is a better way. We must learn to forgive. I've studied this from every angle, sacred and secular, and there is no magic pill that can ever come close to the healing power of forgiveness. Hurt and rejection are a load we were never meant to carry, and a weight you do not have to bear.

Here are four things to consider as you move from hurt and bitterness to forgiveness and health:

1. **We have to learn to forgive ourselves.** Grace means receiving something we don't deserve. Many good people have the giving side of life down pretty well but are not very good at receiving. Maybe it's time to take a look back at that something you have never forgiven yourself for and forgive yourself. I like to tell people this amazing news: God will never define you by your greatest mistake. Neither should you.
2. **Forgiveness is a choice.** If you are struggling with

unforgiveness, then you have to begin by asking God to give you the strength to forgive—it's not an option. This comes with a great warning: You have to realize that choosing not to forgive could be the very thing holding you back from amazing opportunities all around you. When we focus on our hurt and those who hurt us, we can miss the good that is standing just a few feet away.

3. **You aren't alone.** We all have had things said or done to us that brought pain. We have all experienced rejection. We have all experienced betrayal. Jesus is the greatest example of this—when they were crucifying Him, He could have condemned every man who mocked Him that day, and He could have struck dead the man that hammered the nails in His hands, but instead, he prayed this simple prayer: *Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.* In His greatest moment of physical and emotional pain, He gave the greatest example. He chose to forgive.
4. **Don't keep score.** One of the hardest lessons the Bible teaches us about forgiveness is that it is limitless and it doesn't keep score. Actually, God keeps score, but in a very different way. God's mathematics for forgiveness is 70×7 . This is the answer He gave when asked how many times we are required to forgive someone. It simply means that forgiveness knows no end.

It's easy to just turn our backs on others who have wronged us and walk away. But you never walk away without carrying and bearing the marks of unforgiveness: isolation, emotional detachment and even depression. Over time, that gap of separation grows wider and is felt by everyone affected and those closest to you. Time does not heal all wounds, but forgiveness can.

Final Thoughts

We live in an age in desperate need of courageous acts of forgiveness. We must stop drinking poison and expecting it to

hurt the one who hurt us. We only hurt ourselves. When it comes to your family or those closest to you, you must ask God for the strength to not only forgive, but to restore and heal—and to love like you have never been hurt.

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