

# The One Element True Forgiveness Must Include

*Editor's Note: This is part 2 of a two-part series. Find part 1 [here](#).*

As I mentioned in part 1, forgiving someone does not mean you're condoning what they've done; it means you're getting free. It does *not* make you a doormat. There are times when you have to take steps in the natural that hold people accountable for their actions.

But there's a big difference between holding someone accountable and holding a grudge. Accountability is necessary; holding a grudge (harboring unforgiveness) is harmful. You know if you've forgiven someone or not.

Yes, you might have to sue someone (as I mentioned in part 1), but do it *after* you've prayed and forgiven them. If, as you're taking them to court, the vein stands out in your neck and you're spitting mad as you say between gritted teeth, "I'm going to get even," then you know you haven't forgiven them yet. God wants to take you all the way to freedom.

Forgiveness is a heart issue. Take care of the heart issue *inside* first, then proceed with the natural issues that need to be handled *outside*. Be sure you have forgiven before you take any necessary natural action against them (and be sure it's necessary. Ask God!).

## The Issue of Trust

When you've forgiven someone, it doesn't mean you have to trust them ever again. Forgiveness isn't earned (thank goodness! We didn't earn God's forgiveness when He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins), but trust *is* earned. You don't have to be best friends with someone who's hurt you, or even

be around them (unless that's something beyond your control).

If it's possible, repair the broken trust. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." But notice that says if it's possible—sometimes it's not—and as much as it depends on *you*. You can only control what depends on you. You can't force someone else to repent, change or live peaceably with you.

Sometimes you've done all you can to restore relationship and trust, but the other party isn't willing or acting appropriately. Then you have to set the boundaries in a way that will protect you and those you are responsible for. Sometimes it's just best for everyone if you separate yourself from them.

One lady told me, "I thought forgiving meant I had to allow that person to have full access again –to get all their privileges of relationship back. Once I learned it was OK to separate the two, I was able to forgive. Restoration and trust [are] possible, but only if behaviors change. Forgiveness is truly for us and can happen even if the other person never says sorry or changes."

My friend, forgiveness doesn't mean you have to continue a relationship with someone who's hurt you. Romans 16:17 even tells us, "I urge you, brothers, to closely watch those who cause divisions and offenses ... and avoid them." Just because you have forgiven someone, or have to continually forgive them, doesn't mean you have to trust them again.

Seek the Lord, and ask Him if it's better for you to separate yourself. In other words, you don't have to keep putting yourself in a position to be hurt or taken advantage of. All you have to do is forgive them so your heart is free.

*This is an excerpt from Karen's book I Forgive You, But ... Read the first part or order yours here.*

*This article originally appeared at .*

*Listen to the podcast below to hear an interview with a pastor about the power of forgiveness to break down generational wounds.*