

Consequences of Unforgiveness/Bitterness & God's Remedy

Matt. 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, *your Father will not forgive your sins.*

2 Cor. 2:10-11 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven-if there was anything to forgive-I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, *in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."*

Hebrews 12: 14-15 Make every effort to live at peace with all men and to be holy without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that *no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Prov19:11 Good sense makes a person slow to anger, & it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Prov. 17:9 Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, *but dwelling on it separates close friends.*

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that *no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Matt. 18: 15-35 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won a brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two other along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'..... (Jesus then tells the parable of the unforgiving debtor)... Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all of that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? *In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he could pay back what he owed. 'This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from the heart.'* " (some versions use the phrase **"turn him over to the tormentors"**)

**We must understand that when we choose to "hold onto an offense" (no matter the size), i.e. the sin of unforgiveness- we are "turned over to the tormentor"- it starts in our minds but will progress to physical issues if God's Word & ways are not obeyed. Even secular physicians acknowledge that chronic anxiety ("divided mind"- "to go to pieces") causes 75-85% of all chronic diseases ("dis-ease"). Unforgiveness is NOT changed by time- the root only grows deeper. Jesus has paid the price & removed all barriers- if there is any barrier to unforgiveness, it is on our side. We must totally forgive others & ourselves from our hearts.*

God's remedy: James 4: 4-10 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God.? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' **Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, & wail. Change your laughter to mourning & your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

Steps to Total Forgiveness

The prayers and statements below are from “The Steps to Freedom in Christ” by Neil Anderson:

****Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for the riches of Your kindness, forbearance, and patience towards me, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance. I confess that I have not shown that kind of patience towards those who have hurt or offended me (Romans 2:4). Instead, I have held on to my anger, bitterness, and resentment towards them. Please bring to my mind all the people I need to forgive in order that I may do so. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.***

(On a separate piece of paper list all the people who come to your mind. Before you begin working through the process of forgiving those on your list, review what forgiveness is and what it’s not.)

1. Forgiveness is not forgetting.
2. Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of the will.
3. Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person’s sin. We are all living with the consequences of someone else’s sin. **The only choice is to do so in the bondage of bitterness or in the freedom of forgiveness.**
4. Forgive from your heart.
5. Forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone’s sin against him or her anymore.
6. Don’t wait until you feel like forgiving.

Sit down with the first person on your list, and make the choice to forgive him or her for every painful memory that comes to your mind. Stay with that individual until you are sure you have dealt with all the remembered pain. Then work your way down the list in the same way.

As you begin forgiving people, God may bring to your mind painful memories you’ve totally forgotten. Let Him do this even if it hurts. God is surfacing those painful memories so that you can face them once and for all time and let them go. Don’t excuse the offender’s behavior, even if it is someone you are really close to.

Don’t say, “Lord, please help me to forgive.” He is already helping you and will be with you all the way through the process. Don’t say, “Lord, I want to forgive,” because that bypasses the hard choice we have to make. Say, “Lord, I choose to forgive these people and what they did to me.” For every painful memory that God reveals for each person on your list, pray as follows:

*****Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to forgive [name the person] for [what they did or failed to do], because it made me feel [share the painful feelings, for example, rejected, dirty, worthless, or inferior].***

After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, then pray as follows:

Lord Jesus, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I relinquish my right to seek revenge and ask you to heal my damaged emotions. Thank you for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I now ask you to bless those who have hurt me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

*****Additional resource: ‘Total Forgiveness’ (revised & updated) by R. T. Kendall***

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