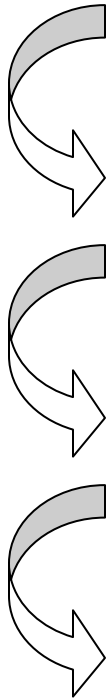


Forgiveness



- I. Uncovering
 - Confronting the anger
 - Becoming aware of cognitive rehearsal of the offence
 - Comparing self with the injuries
 - Altering your world view
- II. Decision
 - Gaining new insights—old strategies are not working
 - Willingness to consider forgiveness as an option
 - Commitment to forgive the offender
- III. Work
 - Reframe the wrong doer—view in context of life events
 - Develop empathy toward the offender
 - Becoming aware of compassion as it emerges toward the offender
- IV. Outcomes
 - Acceptance—absorbing the pain
 - Finding meaning in suffering and in forgiveness
 - Realizing that “self” has needed forgiveness in the past
 - Self is not alone
 - Self may have new purpose as a result of the injury
 - Awareness of both the positive and negative affect
 - Awareness of internal emotional release

Matthew 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.

Colossians 3:13

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Are you finding it difficult to forgive? Has a spouse, relative or close friend betrayed you and you're struggling to release the hurt and offer forgiveness? Have you ever been a victim of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse and you feel that to forgive would be impossible?

Many times our rage, anger, frustration, sleepless nights, and even our depression is rooted in a heart of unforgiveness.

Forgiveness is a process of first recognizing that we are rehearsing the incident over and over in our thoughts. At times, these thoughts can become intrusive, pervasive, and occupy much of our waking existence. In our mind and imagination we revisit the offence often reciting the exact words or actions that were hoisted upon us. If this anger and continued "nursing" of the events is prolonged, it may alter our worldview and we become cynical, suspicious, paranoid, or develop a negative view of ourselves and of all of those around us. **Confronting this anger and recognizing its root cause is the first step in healing and forgiveness.**

Once we recognize where our emotional distress is coming from and that old strategies are not working, the second step in the process of forgiveness is one of choice. **We can decide to consider the act of forgiveness.** We can choose to forgive the offender. Choice is a powerful and liberating tool for individuals to employ and choice is available to everyone.

The third step requires work and intention. We must begin to think of the offender in different terms. **We can intentionally reframe the wrong doer and view the offender in the context of life events.** Perhaps the offender was abused, disenfranchised, neglected, ill, psychotic, insane, abandoned. While none of these circumstances justifies or "makes right" the evil that may have been perpetrated, by reframing the offender in these terms, we can begin to become aware of our compassion or empathy toward the offender.

The final step in this process allows us to find some meaning in our suffering and in our forgiveness. Self may have a new purpose for living as a result of the injury. How could God use this hurt, this offense, to help others? We can begin to understand and realize that "self" has needed forgiveness in the past and our heavenly Father has richly provided mercy and forgiveness to us. We can begin to appreciate that while there may have been many horrific effects of the injury, there could now be positive effects as well.

Forgiveness can be a lengthy journey for some. Where are you on this journey?

If you need someone to assist you with finding your way, contact The Peacemaker Center today for professional counseling from a Christian perspective.

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