

12 R's LEADING TO SELF-FORGIVENESS

Are you riddled with regret, guilt and shame for choices you have made? Do you plague your mind with thoughts of "If only, " I shoulda..." "How could I be so stupid... so insensitive... so naive...?" The Bible reminds us that *"We all sin and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) Did you catch that? We ALL sin! Did you know that the word "sin" is an archery term? It means "to miss the mark." There is no one who always acts and reacts in appropriate ways.

The problem comes when we won't forgive ourselves for what we've done. That often comes from bad programming. It's great to have enough compassion and concern that you feel bad for what you've done. However, hanging on to negative thinking only makes it worse. That's when the companions of unforgiveness set in such as: guilt, shame, lack of worth, anxiety, depression, addictions and shattered esteem. The following are suggestions to consider so that you will set yourself free. Then you can enjoy *"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."* (Galatians 5:22)

REFLECT on what you have to gain by continuing not to forgive yourself. What do you have to gain by forgiving yourself? Are you inflicting self-punishment? Do you gain unhealthy attention from others by holding on to past choices?

RESPONSIBILITY: Accept what happened without hanging onto the guilt.

RESPECT: Do you know others who made mistakes, yet that didn't change the way you feel about them? Perhaps you even have more respect for them because they have acknowledged what they have done. Show yourself the same respect and compassion.

REMORSE: Be humble and allow yourself to be truly sorry for what you did. Apologize to yourself without condemnation.

REPAIR: If appropriate, extend a heart-felt apology to others you may have offended.

REFRAME your way of thinking and responding. When negative thoughts arise, immediately refocus onto something more uplifting. Don't accept the lies you tell yourself. Don't worry about other's opinion of you. Don't believe the lies that demons project into your mind to keep you down.

REVIEW the choices you made and consider how you would rather react when a similar situation happens.

ROLE-PLAY the preferred choices in your mind. See yourself responding more appropriately when similar situations happen. Like the archer, when you miss the mark, make adjustments and keep practicing. Soon you will hit the bull's eye more often.

REPENT: Confess what you did to Jesus and ask Him to help you to remove this burden from yourself. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) He knows you aren't perfect. He didn't come here to judge you; He came to show you a better way to live.

RENEW or begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. **READ AND REREAD** the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament of the Bible. There you will learn who Jesus is, why He came to earth and what is meant by His statement, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6)

REMEMBER: Speaking of the Father, God created YOU. Etch these words on your heart, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)