

FORGIVENESS EXERCISE AND PRAYER

One of the most common ways that humans create blocks in their life is by holding onto unforgiveness towards another or oneself. As a result, unforgiveness opens a host of other doors such as bitterness, resentment, revenge and anger that creates blockages in all areas of one's life. These open doors also make one vulnerable to demonic oppression.

The definition of "forgive," is "to stop feeling resentful or angry toward someone for an offense, flaw or mistake." Forgiveness does not mean that you like or agree with what others have done. It also does not excuse their behavior. If you are waiting to forgive a person until they apologize, that is simply giving away your power and peace of mind. Forgiveness is a blessing that you give to yourself. It is the willful choice to release negative emotions such as bitterness, resentment and anger.

The Bible verse Romans 12:17-21 offers an important perspective to consider. "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing, you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

In order to forgive others, it may help to consider that people who intentionally harm others are often doing so because of unresolved trauma in their own life. They are often acting out in immature ways as a result of what they have suffered and not healed. In cases of severe abuse, if you looked into their eyes while they were doing their heinous crimes, you likely noticed that it wasn't the person looking back at you. At those times, the perpetrator is under the control of demonic beings. The person may not even realize or remember what they did.

Forgiveness was a large part of the teachings of Jesus. So much so that it was one of the four sentences in the model prayer he offered to humankind, commonly known as "The Lord's Prayer." Jesus leaves us with a sobering thought to consider. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:9-15)

Matthew 18 also gives a dire warning. "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" Jesus follows Peter's question with an illustration regarding an unforgiving servant, "his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should repay all that was due to him." Jesus then gives the moral of the story, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

God allows those who do not forgive to be tortured! That gives the demons an opportunity to oppress those who harbor unforgiveness. They do so by inciting bitterness, resentment, revenge and anger. They bombard those who don't forgive themselves with thoughts of blame, shame and guilt. When one harbors unforgiveness, it is like heaping coals of fire on one's own head. Not only that, one's anger and bitterness spills over into other relationships.

Think about this, unforgiveness keeps the pain alive and ties you to the person you refuse to forgive. That is called an unhealthy "soul tie." Close your eyes a few moments and imagine this. Do you really want to stay shackled to those who have harmed you the most? The good news is that you have the keys to unshackle your enemy and walk away. Let God be their judge.

FORGIVENESS EXERCISES

In order to forgive, make yourself vulnerable to God. Go down to the emotional core of your being and bring that pain to the surface so those emotions can release and the healing process can begin. Below are suggestions to help you release unforgiveness. Be creative and add your own.

Get into a quiet state of mind and ask your Creator to show you the people you need to forgive.

1. Make a list of the names of people that comes to mind. This could be someone who bullied you in grammar school, harsh words from a schoolteacher, a family member, friend, spouse, etc.

2. Write down what they did, the feelings you had and the degree to which you felt them.

Example: Mrs. Smith, my fifth-grade teacher, humiliated me. She made fun of me and I was so angry. I was so vulnerable and not able to protect myself from her. I did not care if she fell and hurt herself. Actually, I wanted her to. I wished I could have died because of the humiliation.

3. Write a short note to each person who has hurt you. Tell them what they did and how it made you feel. End each note with: "But I choose to forgive you." Once you have forgiven them, burn the note so no one else reads it.

4. Pray a simple prayer similar to this. You can change the wording to suit yourself. "Lord, I want to confess that I have not loved, but have resented, certain people and have unforgiveness in my heart. Lord, I now choose to forgive (name the person), in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." Pray this prayer for each person on your list.

5. This step can be the hardest but also the most freeing.

Go somewhere alone—the bathroom, or your bedroom—with a mirror. Look at yourself in the mirror. Forgive and release yourself for everything that you need to forgive yourself of.

6. In many cases, it is not possible, necessary or desirable to offer your forgiveness directly to those who have hurt you. However, there may be some people that you can make an apology to. Go into prayer for guidance and consider how you will offer your apology to the other person. Be sure to:

* Label your action as "wrong."

* Be specific and admit what you did.

* Make no defenses or excuses.

* Your confession should lead to the direct question, "Will you forgive me?"

* Do not bring up what they have done to you or blame the other person.

* Do not demand or expect an apology or forgiveness from them. Let that be their choice.

* Your role with this exercise is to apologize for what you did or neglected to do.

* Seek the right place and the right time to approach the offended person. Ask for forgiveness in person with anyone with whom you can talk face to face. Do not go alone when your safety is in danger.

Except where no other means of communication is possible, do not write a letter because a letter can be very easily misread or misunderstood; a letter can be read by people having nothing to do with the offense or the confession; a letter can be kept when it should have been destroyed.

**Once you sincerely forgive someone, you are free,
whether the other person forgives you or not.**

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)

FORGIVENESS PRAYER

Say the prayer out loud, with conviction. Change any wording to fit your unique situation.

"Creator of heaven and earth, I come before you in humility. You formed me; you created me. Nothing in my life is hidden from Your sight. Yet, you still invite me to draw near."

"I confess that I have fallen short in my thoughts, words and actions. I have chosen my own way, instead of Yours. I admit that I have held unforgiveness toward others and myself. This has led to other unholly acts such as anger, bitterness and resentment. I offer my regret and remorse for holding unforgiveness, for I now recognize that in doing so, I hurt others, as well as myself."

"I forgive everyone who has ever hurt, abused, betrayed, lied or disappointed me. I also choose to forgive every institution, organization and authority that has caused undue hardship in my life because of unfairness, theft, deception, abuse or any other means. I choose to let you be the judge of their actions. I admit that I am having a hard time forgiving (person's name). Please help me to see what I must do to forgive him/her. Through faith, I joyfully receive your promise that when I forgive others and myself, you will likewise forgive me."

"Creator, wash away what is unclean within me. Create in me a clean heart, full of love and respect for you. Where I have wounded others, teach me to make amends. Where I have believed lies, replace them with truth. Where fear has ruled me, fill me with trust in You."

"Help me to be free from guilt, blame and shame. Teach me to walk uprightly before You. Guide my steps. Guard my heart. Thank You for Your patience and steadfast love. Let my life reflect gratitude for the mercy You have shown me. Let Your will be my will."

"Thank you for your mercy, grace and love. Amen."

Forgiveness is not about excusing what happened, minimizing the pain, or pretending it didn't matter. It is a deliberate decision to release resentment, surrender the desire for repayment, and place justice and healing into God's hands. When you choose to forgive, you are not declaring the offense acceptable—you are declaring that your freedom is more important than the offense. As the saying goes, "Forgiveness doesn't change the past, but it changes the future."

After completing this exercise and prayer, you may feel lighter, calmer, or deeply at peace. You may also feel more emotional than usual—allow those emotions to move through you without resistance. In the next few days, you may notice less mental clutter and a greater sense of love. Things that once triggered you may no longer have the same impact. Some people feel more energetic, while others need additional rest as their body adjusts. If unforgiveness has kept you in a prolonged state of stress, releasing anger and resentment may allow your body to finally relax, creating space for deeper healing to begin.

If you have experienced demonic interference connected to unforgiveness, you may have sensed resistance before beginning—sudden distractions, doubt-filled thoughts, unusual fatigue, headaches, muscle tightness, or queasiness. Reject thoughts of fear, intimidation, or accusation. When you forgive and pray, you effectively close doors that were opened through anger, bitterness, or resentment. While this work may agitate oppressive influences, it establishes your authority and cancels their legal access. Some weaker entities may release subtly—often through the breath, such as sighs, coughs, yawns, or burps. Stronger oppression may require continued prayer, deeper repentance, renewing your mind with truth, and confronting other open doors such as fear, false beliefs, or harmful behaviors.

Today marks a turning point. You have chosen obedience over bitterness, peace over turmoil, and trust over control. Guard the freedom you have claimed. When memories resurface, reaffirm your decision. When emotions rise, return them to God rather than reclaiming the burden.

Healing deepens as forgiveness is maintained.

Theresa Crabtree