

Out of Darkness Into Light

Wholeness Prayer Basic Modules Module 7

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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Forgiving Others¹

Biblical Basis – Forgiving Others

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).*

*“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ 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**” (Matthew 6:12-15).*

*“...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**” (Matthew 18:21-22).*

*“**Do not repay anyone evil for evil.** Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good**”** (Romans 12:17-21).*

*“**But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. **Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful****” (Luke 6: 35-36).*

*“**Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy**” (Matthew 5:7)*

¹ Main module adapted with permission from “A Theory and Process for Christian Counseling & Inner Healing” by Alfred Davis, pages 71-73, 159-161, and 174

Brief Explanation – Forgiving Others

Forgiveness comes from the heart. (See Matthew 18:21-35.) It is not dependent on the person being forgiven. Forgiving someone involves releasing them from a debt they owe you. In the process you are also released.

What are indicators that you've fully forgiven someone?

- You have compassion on them.
- You don't say negative things about them.
- You can freely bless them.
- You're free from all bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
- You don't accuse, blame or judge them.
- You don't seek repayment or revenge.
- You let go of the offense.

What are indicators that you haven't fully forgiven someone?

- You feel negatively about them.
- You say negative things about them.
- You curse them.
- You feel bitterness, anger, resentment, hate, and/or rage toward them.
- You accuse, blame or judge them.
- You want repayment or revenge.
- You hold on to the offense.

Sometimes choosing to forgive feels impossible. Or you may try, but find yourself still angry, filled with pain, thinking negatively about the person, or experiencing other indicators that you haven't fully forgiven the person for the offense. In this case, it could be that hanging on to the offense seems a better choice than letting go, because of an underlying feeling or belief. For example, remaining angry at the person or feeling worthless may seem like your only choices.

If anger toward the person is hard for you to let go of, it's possible that you feel the anger is protecting you from something worse. Finding what emotion is behind the anger (for example fear or shame), then seeking healing for any related emotional wounds, can bring release from the underlying emotion(s). (See "Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds" for more information.) This then brings you to the place where you can choose to let go of your anger.

If you are in an ongoing situation that involves multiple offenses, forgiveness will be an ongoing need. Forgiveness is not the same as restoration. Restoration involves both parties.

Forgiving someone doesn't exclude learning from past experiences. "An attitude of forgiveness toward offenders does not mean that we release them from responsibility for what they did, nor that we should forget the offense and go on as if nothing ever happened... When the offender continues to be unrepentant, [we] commit them to God to deal with in His own way, not in ours."²

² *Breaking the Bonds of Our Past* by Douglas Hayward, PhD., page 16

Out of Darkness into Light

Step-by-Step Process³ – Forgiving Others

Note: See “Module 1: Overview and Introduction” for beginning and ending steps, and information on how to use the modules in various contexts.

1. Ask God to reveal to you the names of people you need to forgive. List these. (Or ask Him for one name at a time, work through each, then ask Him if there are others you need to forgive.) Ask God to help you forgive each person. See “Sample Prayer for Step 1” (following).
2. For each individual, ask God to bring to your mind any things that you’ve not yet forgiven them for. List these. (Or work through them one-by-one until you can forgive the person for each item God brings to mind.)
3. See if you’re able to fully give each item to Jesus.
4. For any items or emotions that you don’t feel able to fully release, ask God to show you why you can’t. Get God’s perspective at the root of the emotions, conclusions, and perspectives involved. (See “Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds” for more information.) Give up any unwise decisions you’ve made. (See “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds” for more information.)

Also see “Attachment 1 – If You Still Feel Unable or Unwilling to Forgive the Person,” in this module.

5. When you are able to, give each item to Jesus.

There are many ways to facilitate this step of truly giving the offenses to Jesus. Some check each item off the list. Others prefer to burn the list as an offering to Jesus. Still others prefer not to write anything down, but simply give each item to Jesus.

As you give each item to Jesus, ask Him to take all the hurt and pain from the offense(s). Forgive the person for each offense. Give up any resentment, anger, bitterness, hatred, rage, and judgment against them. (For a more detailed explanation of judgment see “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds.”) Give up any remaining desire for revenge against them.

See “Sample Prayer for Step 5,” in “Sample Prayers – Forgiving Others,” in this module.

Note: If working through step 4 is a more lengthy process for some of the items, you can first forgive the person for the items you are able to release. Then come back to this step at a later time for any remaining items.

6. Ask God to help you to see the person the way He sees them. Ask Him to give you compassion for the person.

³ The above “Step-by-Step Process” contains steps that are generally involved when addressing the issue. Modify these as needed to fit the specific situation. Follow God’s leading.

7. Pray a prayer of blessing on the person.
8. If you have trouble with steps 5-7 (or any other steps), ask God to show you why. Work through Step 4 as appropriate. See any other modules that apply.
9. If there are any demonic elements that had a foothold because of something that has now been forgiven, command them in the name of Jesus to go now where He sends them, and never return. Ask Jesus to fill with Himself any empty places in you. See “Sample Prayer for Step 9,” in “Sample Prayers – Forgiving Others,” in this module.
10. Ask God to help you continually choose the road of forgiveness, love, and mercy.
11. Thank Him for all He’s done!

Sample Prayers – Forgiving Others

Sample Prayer for Step 1

I proclaim my faith in the Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Jesus, you have asked me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Give me grace, mercy and strength to forgive those who have hurt me. Holy Spirit, please reveal to me now the names of all the people I need to forgive.

Sample Prayer for Step 5

Lord God, I choose to forgive [the person’s name] for [describe in detail every painful and hurtful offense that Jesus has brought to mind and that you’re ready to release]. I give all these painful memories to you now. Please come and take away all the hurt and pain connected with these memories, and set me free.

Lord God, I give up my desire for revenge against [name of person] and I now release him/her to you. I also choose to release to you all my bitterness, anger, resentment, hate and rage that I have been holding against [name of person].

Lord God, I also confess and renounce any remaining sin of judgment against [name of person]. I repent of that judgment and I bind it to the cross of Jesus Christ. I choose now to travel the road of love, forgiveness and mercy. Amen.

Sample Prayer for Step 9

I come before you now Lord God, as your child, purchased by the blood of Christ. I commit myself to the renewing of my mind and I align my will with your good and perfect will. “I denounce any attempts by Satan or his demons to attach themselves to me through my anger or my hurts, and thereby to cause trouble for [me] and others. In the name of Jesus Christ I command all such demons to depart from me and to never return.”⁴ Lord Jesus, please fill me now with your Holy Spirit and shine your light where there once was darkness. In Your name I pray. Amen.

⁴ *Breaking the Bonds of Our Past* by Douglas Hayward, PhD. , page 18

Out of Darkness into Light

Follow-up – Forgiving Others

1. Get God’s perspective on whether or not you should go to the person and tell them about the offense. If the person is a fellow disciple, and the offense is clearly a sin, follow Matthew 18:15-18: *“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 your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others 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 even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

Note: For more serious offenses, where you might be in personal danger if you confront the person, get the advice of a trusted pastor or counselor.

2. Ask Jesus to show you what response is appropriate toward the person. Work to set good boundaries. (For example, if you have been sexually abused, not being alone with that person would be a good boundary to have.) See “Module 12: Living in the Light.”

Note: Especially for more serious offenses, “we may have to choose to live in a manner that continues to hold the offender accountable for [their] actions, particularly in order to protect other people from becoming victims. As such, criminal prosecution may be in order, or publicly exposing that person, or breaking off contact with them may be necessary.”⁵

3. Grow in learning and applying how God would have you show His love to the person.

4. Continue to work through other modules as they apply to your situation. See “Attachment 1: Guide to Which Modules to Use” in “Module 1: Overview and Introduction.”

⁵ ibid, page 16

Process Diagram
Module 7 – Forgiving Others

- *Opening prayer*
- *Ask God to reveal to you the names of **people you need to forgive**. List these.*
- *For each individual, ask God to bring to your mind **any things that you've not yet forgiven them for**. List these.*
- *See if you're **able to fully give each item** to Jesus.*
- *For any items or emotions that you **don't feel able** to fully release, ask God to show you **why** you can't. Get **God's perspective** at the root of the emotions, conclusions, and perspectives involved. Give up any **unwise decisions** you've made.*
- *When you are able to, **give each item to Jesus**. As you give each item to Jesus, ask Him to **take all the hurt and pain** from the offense(s). **Forgive** the person for each offense. Give up any **resentment, anger, bitterness, hatred, rage, and judgment** against them. Give up any **remaining desire for revenge** against them.*
- *Ask God to help you to **see the person the way He sees them**. Ask Him to give you **compassion** for the person.*
- *Pray a **prayer of blessing** on the person.*
- *If you have **trouble** with any of these steps, ask God to show you **why**. **Work through** this as appropriate. See any modules that apply.*
- *If there are any **demonic elements** that had a foothold because of something that has now been forgiven, **command them in the name of Jesus to go now where He sends them, and never return**. Ask Jesus to fill with Himself any empty places in you.*
- *Ask God to help you continually **choose the road of forgiveness, love, and mercy**.*
- *Thank Him for all He's done!*
- *Closing prayer*
- *Follow-up: see Module 7.*

Out of Darkness into Light

Attachment 1. If You Still Feel Unable or Unwilling to Forgive the Person

Biblical Basis – Regarding Feeling Unable or Unwilling to Forgive

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” 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” (Matthew 6:12-15).

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck you’re your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).

Brief Explanation – Regarding Feeling Unable or Unwilling to Forgive

Sometimes it may seem that what someone has done to hurt you is just too big to forgive. Or that you can’t forgive them for some other reason. If you feel unable or unwilling to forgive someone, it would be good to look more at the potential implications of this for your life.

When you choose not to forgive someone, you are also choosing not to be free yourself from the implications of the offense. You end up focusing overly much on the offense and acting in reaction to it. When you focus on the offense, even part of the time⁶, you’re not fully focused on God and on walking in His ways. You’re instead choosing to focus on the thing that hurt you.

You might be choosing not to forgive the person in order to seek revenge, prove something, punish the person who has hurt you, or for some other reason. Whatever the reason, your decisions are being negatively influenced by the person who has hurt you. You are acting in reaction *to* them, instead of being freed *from* the pain of the offense. This adds more hurt to you, in addition to the hurt you’ve already experienced.

When you choose *not* to forgive someone, or choose to judge them, you are choosing to live in bondage. This bondage pulls you downward. It usually leads to more bad choices, then to more pain and further bondage. Choosing not to forgive someone also leads to not being forgiven yourself (Matthew 6:15). Choosing to judge someone leads to being judged (Matthew 7:1). Choosing to seek revenge against someone may result in you suffering the greatest consequences of that choice.

⁶ This is not meant to refer to working through the offense, with God’s help, and forgiving the offender. Focusing on the offense briefly to facilitate forgiveness can be part of seeking God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

When you choose to forgive someone, you benefit in many ways. You are set free from an unhealthy tie to the offense. You can ask Jesus to heal the pain of the offense and fill you with His overflowing joy. You are free to focus more fully on Christ and His great love for you.

When you choose to forgive someone, you are leaving them for God to deal with in His own way. He will take care of whatever judging or punishment needs to happen. Jesus is the one who has authority to judge. *“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:26-27).*

Step-by-Step Process⁷ – Regarding Feeling Unable or Unwilling to Forgive

1. Decide whether you want to forgive the person.
2. Decide to leave to Jesus any judging or punishing of the person.
3. Ask Jesus to forgive you for previously choosing the path of unforgiveness.
4. Ask Jesus to help you *“clothe [yourself] with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [And to] bear with [others] and forgive whatever grievances you may have against [them]. [And to] forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues [to] put on love...” (Colossians 3:12b-14a)*
5. Continue working through the steps in “Step-by-Step Process – Forgiving Others,” in this module.

⁷ The above “Step-by-Step Process” contains steps that are generally involved when addressing the issue. Modify these as needed to fit the specific situation. Follow God’s leading.

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