

Out of Darkness Into Light

Wholeness Prayer Basic Modules Module 8

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

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Forgiving your Parents¹

Biblical Basis – Forgiving your Parents

“Honor your father and mother” – which is the first commandment with a promise – that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph 6:2-3).

“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” (Matt. 7:1-2).

“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).

Brief Explanation – Forgiving your Parents

If you haven't yet forgiven your father or your mother, you may find yourself acting in reaction to the very things you're seeking to be free from. You may either become more and more like them (such as becoming more and more bitter) or more and more different to make sure that you aren't like them at all (such as being overly lenient with your own children, to avoid being overly harsh). This can be the result of an oath made in childhood or later on, such as “I'll never be like my father”, or “I'll never speak to my mother again.” When you're acting in reaction to your parent, your focus is on them, not on God and His ways. “Apart from accepting and forgiving our parents, *as they are*, we cannot get our identities separated from them and go on to accept ourselves. We are therefore in danger of becoming more and more like them.”² As negative decisions you've made in reaction to your parents (such as oaths) are broken and you forgive your parent(s) and accept them as they are, you are freed to follow God's ways, instead of acting in reaction to your parent's ways.

One thing that can hinder your ability to forgive your parent(s) is the idea that forgiving them means accepting their sin. Children tend to see who their parents are as inseparable from their parent's sins and weaknesses. “The parent and the behavior appear to the child to be one. Later, in order to be free, the son or daughter has to separate the two. The child has to forgive the sin and accept the sinner.”³

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

² “*Crisis in Masculinity*” by LeAnn Payne, pg 63-64

³ *ibid* pg 57

Module 8: Forgiving your Parents

The ability to differentiate between your parent and their sin involves being able to look at the issues objectively. This objectivity, which comes from God and is a part of maturity, helps you to identify and “accept the situation for what it [actually] *is* and *has been*.”⁴ “The parent is to be forgiven and *objectively accepted for what he has been and at this moment is*. His sin...is to be honestly [identified] and renounced for what it was and may yet still be.”⁵ As you grow in objectivity, you will more and more be able to bless your parent from a position of security in Christ. This ability to bless your parent will not be dependent on “the fact that [your] parent is unable to bless [you] (or even reform) in return.”⁶

For example, when Emily was a child, her mother often yelled at her in anger, saying things like, “Why can’t you ever do anything right?” Emily had felt that forgiving her mother for this would mean that Emily really can’t do anything right. After learning that a child tends to see their parent as inseparable from their sin, Emily was able to separate *what* her mother said and did in anger from *who* her mother was and now is. She was then able to forgive her mother for the hurtful things that her mother had said to her, while accepting her mother as she is. She then felt compassion for her mother and prayed for her, asking God to bless her and help her to grow to be all God intends her to be.

Note: It’s possible that you feel that one parent is at fault, when you actually felt rejected by the other parent. “A child takes the loss of a parent, whether through death, divorce, or however, as a personal rejection. The rejections we are not healed of we [may] project onto others”⁷ As you begin to forgive, you may “realize that some of [your] grievances against a parent are unfounded, that it is in fact necessary to forgive the *other* parent, the idealized one whose absence [you] have unconsciously taken as a personal rejection.”⁸

(For more information, especially about forgiveness in the context of ongoing relational problems, see also “Module 7: Forgiving Others.”)

⁴ *ibid*, pg 58

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid* pg 60

⁷ *ibid* pg 58

⁸ *ibid* pg 59

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Step-by Step Process⁹ – Forgiving your Parents

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

Work through this process for each parent, as needed.

1. Ask God to help you objectively see your parent as He sees them. Ask him to help you see your parent as distinct from their sin.
2. Ask God to help you to accept the person your parent is, and forgive their sin. Ask Him to give you compassion for your parent. Thank God for all the good attributes in your parent.
3. Ask God to reveal any areas where you’re acting in reaction to your parent. For each of these areas, ask God to reveal any unhealthy thoughts or feelings you have toward your parent, including any oaths you’ve made that are still in effect. (*For example, you might be climbing professionally to prove that “You’ll never amount to anything” isn’t true.*) Work through breaking these internal strongholds. (See “Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds” and “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds” for more information.)

Note: If you have made a vow not to be like your parent, you may feel that giving up this vow would mean you would become like your parent. There is another choice. Ask God to help you to instead be like Jesus.

Ask God to help you to separate the good things your parent does from their sin. Ask Him to help you to imitate the good things you see, and not the sin.

4. Ask God to help you list any things that you need to forgive your parent for.
5. See if you’re able to fully give each item to Jesus.
6. 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 unhealthy decisions that you made in reaction to your parent. (See “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds” for more information.)
7. 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.

⁹ 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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As you give each item to Jesus, ask Him to take all the hurt and pain from the offense(s). Release the person from 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 6,” (following).

If you have trouble with this step (or any of these steps), ask God to show you why. Work through steps 2 and 5 as appropriate.

Note: If working through steps 2 and 5 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.

8. Take responsibility for your own reactions to your parent. Confess and repent of your own sins relative to the issues involved. (See “Module 4: Confessing and Turning from Sin” for more information.)

9. If there are any demonic elements that had a foothold because of something that has now been addressed, command them in the name of Jesus to go now where He sends them, and never return. Bind any effects of your parent’s sin on you or your offspring. Ask God to set you and your offspring free from any restrictions on your spirit or soul due to the sin of that parent. Ask Jesus to fill with Himself any empty places in you. See “Sample Prayer for Step 8,” (following).

10. Bless (or ask someone else to pray a prayer of blessing over) all that is good in you that was passed on by your parent.

11. Pray a prayer of blessing and acceptance on your parent. See “Sample Prayer for Step 10,” (following).

12. Ask God to help you continually choose to love, forgive, and bless your parent.

13. Thank Him for all He’s done!

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Sample Prayers – Forgiving your Parents

Sample Prayer for Step 6

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 8

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 [reject] 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."¹⁰ In Jesus' name I also bind any effects of my parent(s) sin on myself or my offspring. Lord God, please set me and my offspring free from any restrictions on our spirits or souls due to the sin of my parent(s). Please fill me now with your Holy Spirit and shine your light where there once was darkness. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Sample Prayer for Step 10 (adapt as needed)

*"Father [God], I thank You for creating my father... in Your image. With all my heart I forgive him for not becoming all You created him to be. I realize now that he needed the healing that I am even now receiving. Someway, somehow, Lord [God], as I accept and forgive my father, may his life as it has been handed on to me become all You ever intended it to be. Lord [God], I do forgive him all his offenses against me. I do accept him **as he is**, an unhealed and needy person... I thank You for all You made him to be, all You created him to be. I will look for the real person You intended him to be, and in Your Name I will affirm it whenever I see it. I look to You now, for the affirmation I always wanted so badly from him. Love him when You can, Lord [Jesus], through me."¹¹ Lord [Jesus], help me to see myself as no longer acting in reaction to my parent¹², but "calmly reaching out to him a hand of blessing **if and when** the opportunity presents itself".¹³*

¹⁰ *Breaking the Bonds of Our Past* by Douglas Hayward, PhD. , pg18

¹¹ "Crisis in Masculinity" by LeAnn Payne, pg 60

¹² Concept from *ibid*

¹³ Quote from *ibid*

Follow-up – Forgiving your Parents

1. Grow in learning how to respond to your parent in a healthy way, with appropriate boundaries. (For example, if you have been sexually abused, not being alone with that person would be a good boundary to have.)
2. Grow in learning how to bless your parent and appropriately show God's love to them.
3. See also "Module 7: Forgiving Others" and "Module 3: Replacing Family Curses with God's Blessings."
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."

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Process Diagram

Module 8 – Forgiving Your Parents

- *Opening prayer*
- *Work through this process for **each parent**, as needed.*
- *Ask God to help you **objectively see your parent** as He sees them. Ask him to help you **see your parent as distinct from their sin**.*
- *Ask God to help you to **accept the person your parent is**, and **forgive their sin**. Ask Him to give you **compassion** for your parent. **Thank God** for all the good attributes in your parent.*
- *Ask God to reveal any areas where you're **acting in reaction** to your parent. For each of these areas, ask God to reveal any **unhealthy thoughts or feelings** you have toward your parent, including any **oaths** you've made that are still in effect. **Work through** breaking these internal strongholds.*
- *Ask God to help you **list** any things that you need to forgive your parent for.*
- *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 **unhealthy decisions** that you made in reaction to your parent.*
- *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). **Release** the person from each offense. Give up any **resentment, anger, bitterness, hatred, rage, and judgment** against them. Give up any remaining desire for **revenge** against them.*
- *If you have trouble with any of these steps, ask God to show you **why**. **Work through** steps and modules as appropriate.*
- *Take **responsibility** for your own reactions to your parent. **Confess and repent** of your own sins relative to the issues involved.*
- *If there are any **demonic elements** that had a foothold because of something that has now been addressed, **command them in the name of Jesus to go now where He sends them, and never return**. Bind any effects of your parent's sin on you or your offspring.*
- ***Bless** (or ask someone else to pray a prayer of blessing over) all that is good in you that was passed on by your parent.*
- *Pray a prayer of **blessing and acceptance** on your parent.*
- *Ask God to help you continually choose to **love, forgive, and bless your parent**.*
- ***Thank Him** for all He's done!*
- *Closing prayer*
- *Follow-up: see Module 8.*