



Forgiveness: Setting Your Captives FREE!

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Have you ever found yourself making (or thinking) any of the following statements? As you work through this exercise, consider how God may want to adjust your thinking as it relates to the issue of forgiveness.

1. “There’s no unforgiveness in my heart.”

Do you still feel angry at the person who hurt you? Do you have a secret desire to see them pay for what they did to you? Do you find yourself telling others how they hurt you?

If you answered yes to any of those questions, it’s an indication you have not fully forgiven one or more people who have sinned against you.

2. “There’s no way I could ever forgive [person] for [offense]. He (she) hurt me too deeply.”

How has God dealt with us who have sinned against Him so greatly? (See Ephesians 2:4–5; Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 10:17; Micah 7:18–19.)

How does the New Testament command us to respond to those who wrong us? (See Luke 6:27; Luke 17:3–4; Romans 12:17–21.)

3. “They don’t deserve to be forgiven.”

What did we do to earn or deserve God’s forgiveness? (See Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4–9).

4. “If I forgive them, they’re off the hook!”

Letting the offender off your *hook* does not mean they are off God’s hook. Forgiveness involves transferring the prisoner over to the One who is responsible for meting out justice. It relieves us of the burden and responsibility to hold them in prison ourselves.

5. “I’ve forgiven them, but I’ll never be able to forget what they did to me.”

When God forgives us, what does He promise to do? (See Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17; Psalm 103:12.)

God does not ask us to *forget* the wrong that has been done to us, but simply to *forgive*. However, the attitude of our heart, when we think of the offense, can be an indicator of whether or not we have truly forgiven.

6. “I believe I have forgiven, but I still struggle with feelings of hurt.”

What must we be willing to do in addition to forgiving those who sin against us? (See Luke 6:27–31; Romans 12:17–21.)

The act of forgiveness is only the starting place for dealing with those who wrong us. It must be followed by a commitment to “return good for evil.” This investment is the key to experiencing emotional healing and wholeness. In situations where it is not possible or appropriate to rebuild the relationship with an individual, we can still invest in their life through prayer.

7. “I won’t forgive!”

Ultimately, forgiveness comes down to a choice. It is a choice that God both commands and enables. But some simply refuse to make that choice.

What can we expect if we refuse to forgive those who sin against us? (See Matthew 6:14–15; Matthew 18:32–35; 2 Corinthians 2:10–11).

Choosing the pathway of forgiveness can be extremely difficult. You may have been sinned against in ways that have caused enormous pain and consequences in your life. Just reading this may be opening up some wounds or memories you’d just as soon not face. Be assured that if you are willing to walk into the pain, God will go there with you. Hard as it may be to forgive those who have sinned against you, you will experience great freedom as you choose to obey God, by His grace.