**Experiment #1 - Forgiving Those Who Have Offended You**

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*“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”* (Matthew 6:12) — In this text, Jesus reveals that you limit your experience of the freedom that God gives through forgiveness to the degree that you refuse to forgive those who have wounded or offended you.

***What Can the Symptoms of Unforgiveness Look Like?***

Ask yourself these questions: Is there a person to whom you tend to...

* Continually rehearse the wounding scenarios connected to this person?
* Avoid and treat with indifference?
* Talk to others about in a negative light?
* Carry a secret wish that they would somehow fail or feel pain?
* Treat in a passive/aggressive way?
* Become easily offended by?

***Why Should You Practice Forgiveness?***

Because unforgiveness affects your **relationship with God!**

* Matthew 6:14,15 - *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.*

Because unforgiveness destroys your **relationship with others!**

* Psalm 73:21,22 - *When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.*
* Hebrews 12:14,15 - *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Because unforgiveness gives the devil a **foothold!**

* 2 Corinthians 2:10,11 - *If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*
* Ephesians 4:26,27 - *“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*
* Matthew 18:21-35 ° The prison of unforgiveness

It’s like drinking rat poison thinking it will somehow hurt the other person. (I have the right to have this poison and keep drinking it!)

## 60

***Forgiveness Exercise:***

The following is a tool designed to help a person work through the emotional, relational, and spiritual results of being hurt by another. Everyone has been and will be hurt by others in this life. We have no choice in this matter because we live in a fallen world full of broken people. But we do have a choice in terms of how we will respond to those who wound us. The great news is that Jesus Christ has provided the way out of a life of fixation on one’s hurts and failures. The answer is simple, yet profound and powerful. The answer is forgiveness. By applying the gospel of forgiveness to our wounds, we are set free from living a life of reaction to the pain and anger of being hurt. Forgiveness is at the center of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus sets us free by graciously forgiving us and by enabling us to forgive others. Yet, while available to all, this forgiveness must be individually received and applied.

***How Do You Practice Forgiveness?***

1. **Clarify** the offense (e.g., broken trust, lied against, gossip/slander, abandonment, betrayal, abuse, etc.)
2. **Identify** any sinful reactions (e.g., bitterness, resentment, hatred, avoidance, revenge, criticalness, gossip, keeping a record of wrongs, etc.).
3. **Confess** to God all sinful reactions.
4. **Forgive** every offense.
   1. “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

*(name)*  *(the offense)*

* 1. “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I choose this day to no longer live in reaction to that which you have said and/or done against me.”
  2. “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I release you from the prison of my unforgiveness. Even as I have been forgiven, so also in Jesus’ name I forgive you.”

1. **Bless** the offender. (Romans 12:14)
2. **Dismiss** any demonic oppression.
3. **Do not confuse forgiveness with the healing of the wound.** Keep forgiving while you go through the process of healing the wounds and losses you are forgiving for. Keep forgiving as an act of will as long as the emotions continue to manifest.