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FORGIVENESS: *Letting Go*

What forgiveness is and is not, how God forgives us, and how to begin forgiving someone who hurt you

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

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FORGIVENESS

LIVING FAITH

FORGIVENESS: *Letting Go*

What forgiveness is and is not, how God forgives us, and how to begin forgiving someone who hurt you



FORGIVENESS IS ONE OF THE WORDS PEOPLE SEARCH FOR MOST IN the Bible, and one of the hardest things God asks of us. Maybe someone betrayed you, abused you, abandoned you, lied about you or took something you can never get back. The hurt is real. The anger may be justified.

And yet Jesus taught us to pray, *"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* This booklet will not pretend forgiveness is easy. It will show what forgiveness really is, why God asks it of us, and how to take the first step — for your own sake as much as theirs.

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

COLOSSIANS 3:13 · KJV

WHAT FORGIVENESS *is not*



FORGIVENESS IS NOT...	BECAUSE...
Pretending it didn't hurt	God never asks us to lie. Name the wrong honestly.
Saying it was okay	Forgiveness says <i>it was wrong, and I release it anyway.</i>
Forgetting	You may always remember. Forgiveness changes what the memory does to you.
Trusting again right away	Forgiveness is free; trust is earned over time.
Staying in danger	You can forgive someone and still keep yourself and your children safe. Abuse should be reported.
A one-time feeling	It is often a decision you make again and again.

WHAT FORGIVENESS *is*



In the Bible, sin is often pictured as a debt. When someone wrongs you, they owe you. To forgive is to cancel the debt: to stop demanding that they pay, and to hand the case over to God, the only just Judge. Paul writes, "*Avenge not yourselves ... for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*" (Romans 12:19).

WHY FORGIVE?

Because we have been forgiven. God cancelled a debt we could never pay.
Because unforgiveness is a prison. Someone said holding a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. It hurts you most.
Because Jesus did it. On the cross He prayed for the men who were killing Him: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

START HERE

GOD'S FORGIVENESS *for you*



We can only give what we have received. Before you try to forgive anyone else, make sure you have received God's forgiveness for yourself.

- 1 *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

Confess, and God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse.

- 2 *He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

PSALM 103:10-12

God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He removes them as far as east is from west.

3

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

MICAH 7:18-19

God delights in mercy and throws our sins into the depths of the sea.



"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion." Luke 15:20

MATTHEW 18:21-35

A STORY JESUS TOLD

Peter asked how many times he had to forgive — seven? Jesus said seventy times seven, and told a story. A servant owed his king a fortune he could never repay. The king forgave it all. Then that same servant went out and choked a

fellow servant who owed him a few dollars, and threw him in prison. When the king heard, he was furious: *"Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?"*

A PATH TO FORGIVING

TAKING THE *first steps*



1

BE HONEST ABOUT THE HURT

Write down what happened and how it made you feel. Tell God all of it.

2

REMEMBER YOUR OWN FORGIVENESS

Read Psalm 103 and thank God for what He has forgiven in you.

3

DECIDE TO RELEASE THE DEBT

Forgiveness begins as a choice, not a feeling. Say, *Lord, with Your help, I choose to forgive* _____.

4

PRAY FOR THEM

Jesus said to pray for those who hurt you (Matthew 5:44). It is hard at first, and it changes your heart.

5

REPEAT AS NEEDED

When the anger returns, forgive again. Seventy times seven.

6

SEEK RECONCILIATION IF IT IS SAFE

If the relationship can be restored, take a step toward peace. If it can't, forgive from a distance.

ASKING *for forgiveness*



Sometimes we are the ones who need to be forgiven. A real apology is simple: *I was wrong. I'm sorry. I hurt you. Will you forgive me? How can I make it right?* No excuses, no *but*. Then leave the rest to God and to them.



A PRAYER TO FORGIVE

Lord, You know what _____ did, and You know how much it hurt. I can't forgive them in my own strength, so I am asking for Yours. I choose today to release them from the debt they owe me. I hand the case over to You, the righteous Judge. Heal the wound they left. Take the bitterness out of my heart. And as You have forgiven me, help me to forgive.

AMEN.

SIT WITH IT

Who do I need to forgive?

Who do I need to ask for forgiveness?



“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

EPHESIANS 4:32

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

“Big Wesley” · The Freedom Church · Founded June 6, 1820

SUNDAY SCHOOL	9:30 AM
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SUNDAY WORSHIP	11:00 AM
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