

# Forgiveness

## the key to freedom

### Start Here

A person called Pako in Spain got into a heated argument with his father and left home. His father looked for him everywhere, but couldn't find him. After 3 months, he commissioned this advertisement on the front page of a local newspaper: 'My dear son, Pako, I love you! I am sorry that we argued so intensely. I want you to know that I have forgiven you and I ask for your forgiveness, too. If you see this, please come to the news stand in the middle of the town tomorrow at 12 noon.'

The following day, hundreds of people by the name of Pako were waiting in front of the news stand!

### Discuss

While humorous, this story highlights a common experience for many. Why do you think so many people responded to the ad?

### Explore the Word

None of us gets through life without being hurt by others. We can be hurt by another's choices, through a disagreement, by a harmful action, or through a cruel word. The pains we receive at another's hands are among the deepest we ever experience, especially when it comes through a family member or someone close to us. The pain can be just as deep if someone we love has been harmed. Forgiveness is one of the hardest tasks we are called to do.

So, why might we even consider forgiving?

Read Matthew 18:21–35

- In this parable, why was the servant expected to look kindly on the one who owed him money?
- Where, like the servant, are you still holding onto an offence? Share with each other.

### Main Idea (Part 1)

**Jesus wants us to be free. He teaches us that forgiveness is the path to freedom.** He calls us to forgive for many reasons. Consider these three:

1. We forgive because God has forgiven us. The more we grasp the great mercy and grace of God towards us, the more we want to respond by extending it to others.
2. We forgive out of obedience. The one who has shown us such mercy commands us to offer mercy as well.

3. Though it is hard to forgive at times, unforgiveness will hurt us even more, causing more damage to our own hearts in the long run. Unforgiveness binds us to the offender and the offense. God wants us to be free and to be healed.

Before we look at how we can forgive, let's be sure we know what forgiveness is *not* .

- Forgiveness is *not* denying the offense. God asks us to live in truth – we don't pretend that we were not hurt. We must begin with absolute honesty about the offense.
- Forgiveness is *not* an instant change in our emotions. It may take time for our emotions to heal, but when we forgive, the process begins.

## Main Idea (Part 2)

**As we begin to open ourselves to the idea of forgiving others, consider each step in the process:**

- **Acknowledge the offence.** Be honest and clear about what has happened.
- **Ask God to heal the wound in you.** You may still be tender in heart, body or spirit – open that hurt place to God's touch.
- **Choose to forgive.** Speak this decision aloud before God, and if possible with another trusted friend.
- **Pray a blessing on the person you need to forgive.** This is another difficult step, but your ability to ask God's best for the offender will be an indicator for you as to how much you have truly released and forgiven this person.
- **Repeat!** Forgiveness begins with a decision but often involves a process to complete. You must decide, then continue to affirm that decision again each day as your emotions begin to heal and you progress into living in freedom.

## Practice Together Now

Read Colossians 3:13.

Are you ready to forgive as the Lord has forgiven you?

Spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit who you need to forgive.

Take the time for each of you to walk through the steps above regarding the one you need to forgive. Be a prayerful presence to one another as you each go through this process.

Agree to the following:

- As you share personal stories, maintain confidentiality and do not gossip.
- If what you share involves ongoing abuse, seek guidance from your church leadership or other professional help.

## Review your Practice Daily

- With regard to the person you chose to forgive, continue to review the steps of forgiveness in your quiet time each day. If you find the pain is still very deep, ask each other for more prayer. Also, bring this need for further prayer and ministry to your pastor.

- Throughout the week, notice how you think about or speak of this person. Choose blessing when they come to mind. When appropriate, take a step of reconciliation – call them, visit them, or simply pray God’s best over them.
- Every morning in your personal time of devotion, examine your heart and forgive the people who have wronged you. Commit your feelings and emotions to God so he can heal them. Reflect on the following verses:
  - Colossians 3:12-15
  - Romans 12:19