



# Leadership Link

## Extra

### **FORGIVENESS** by Dr. Jerry Nance

When you are betrayed by someone you had the deepest respect for, it really hurts. It's challenging to think about forgiving people who have hurt us, isn't it? We don't want to let go of the painful memories of abuse, put-downs, broken promises, harsh words, family or work offenses.

One outstanding example of forgiveness occurred when Corrie Ten Boom met a former Nazi Officer who had abused her and her sister during imprisonment, assisting in the death of other prisoners. He told her he had become a Christian and proceeded to ask Corrie to forgive him. As he reached out his hand towards her Corrie resisted. Then in obedience to God as she extended her hand towards him she felt the surge of the Holy Spirit pour through her in a supernatural act of forgiveness.

We had a student in one of our juvenile programs who ran away one night only to be killed in a car wreck. The driver was a young soldier who picked this child up and went speeding down the road. He ran off the side of the road and hit a tree, instantly killing this 15 year old girl. Her parents forgave the driver and even appeared in court to ask the judge that he be sentenced to Teen Challenge for a year. The judge agreed. This young man made a commitment to Christ and completed the program.

Accounts like this are amazing! How could people like Corrie and these parents endure such great injustices and then turn around and forgive the villains? Yet all they did was simply obey the command: "forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

Phillip Yancey wrote: "Forgiveness is another way of admitting, I'm human, I make mistakes, I want to be granted that privilege and so I grant you that privilege."

Forgiveness cancels a debt someone owes us and opens the door to restore a broken relationship. In a world filled with sin and evil, forgiveness helps us start over with people and with God.

We learn about real forgiveness at the foot of the cross where Jesus Christ shed His blood to pay for the sins of the whole world. That is God's kind of forgiveness—free, sacrificial, no cost on our part.

When we experience his forgiveness we want to obey Him like Corrie and Mrs. Washington, extending that forgiveness to others.

So, how do we practically forgive someone who has hurt us? Here are some steps to forgiveness. Applying these steps to our lives can help deliver us from bitterness and work towards forgiveness.

### **Steps to Forgiveness**

1. We need to know and experience Christ's love and forgiveness deeply in our own lives. Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
2. We can make the choice to forgive. When Corrie ten Boom extended her hand to the former Nazi officer, she chose to follow Christ instead of her feelings. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:31-32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." NIV
3. Christ can help us overcome negative thoughts and beliefs which block forgiveness. We can ask him to soften our hearts and change our minds towards that person, granting us the power to forgive him/her. Philippians 4:8,13
4. We can recognize that we are sinners in need of forgiveness. This helps us empathize with those who have injured us. The mother's acceptance of her daughter's killer was based on her realization that she was a sinner in need of grace as well. Paul writes in Romans 15:7-8, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."
5. The Holy Spirit can empower us, when we surrender to him daily, with the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, self-control towards those who have hurt us. Galatians 5:22-23
6. When it is still hard to forgive, we can place our trust in God who will someday judge all the wrongs in the world. We can leave revenge and justice up to Him...because Proverbs 20:22 says, "Do not say I'll pay you back for this wrong! Wait for the Lord, and He will deliver you." Paul writes in Romans 12:19 "Do not

take revenge my friends but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It's mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord."

7. When we are stuck in unforgiveness, we can ask to talk and pray with a trusted friend, a pastor or a counselor to help us deal with the resentment and hurt we feel towards the offender. This will provide a context for release of the painful feelings we are experiencing, provide support, and a better understanding of the person and situation.

When others hurt or abuse us, disrespect or humiliate us, we can forgive them. God Himself is the power behind our ability to forgive. He can enable us to do the impossible: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Philippians 2:13

Perhaps the most powerful outcome of forgiveness is that it changes us and helps us become more like Christ. As He hung dying on the cross, he said, "...Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

God's love and grace is the power behind forgiveness, granting us supernatural power to forgive others, the power to overcome resentment, the power to redeem relationships and show God's love to a hurting world.

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