

Forgiveness Faq's

The 5-steps of Forgiveness are designed to become a (new) powerful habit that offers release from bitterness caused by the offense, insensitivity and injustice of individuals and groups.

FAQ ONE

Do I need to tell the person I forgive them?

No. **Forgiveness** is the pathway for liberation from the bitterness caused by the offence, insensitivity and injustice of others. Forgiveness releases anger and anguish, enabling us move on from the wrong done to us confidently, compassionately and happily. It is an inner working of the heart made possible with God's grace.

Reconciliation is a secondary benefit, which may or may not happen, depending on the circumstances. For example, when it is a large group, it is neither practical nor possible to tell them all. If someone does not know they have offended and hurt you, it may be prudent not telling them lest doing so reignites conflict. Sometimes the person having offended and hurt is unreachable. It is wise not to engage an offender who is unlikely and unwilling to receive forgiveness, instead really wanting to continue spinning a web of offence and hurt.

Of course, there are instances when re-initiating a relationship may bring deep healing for all involved.

FAQ TWO

How do I forgive myself?

Forgiving myself can be one of the most difficult acts we undertake. It requires the infusion of grace.

Forgiveness does not change us as much as it opens for us a way to connect with God so that His healing mercy is received and changes us. Forgiving myself requires trust in the love of Christ which conquers all things (cf. Romans 8:37; Philippians 4:13).

While the 5-steps are designed to help us forgive others, make **Forgiveness** a habit – practice **Forgiveness** – and expect God to relieve you from all your labors and burdens (cf. Matthew 11:29).



FAQ THREE

What about Jesus' saying, "If you bring your gift to the altar and there remember your brother has something against you, go and be reconciled with your brother first...." (Mt. 5:23)?

Jesus is explaining how we are to act when we are the offender. We must recognize our offence and seek to make amends and reconcile with all whom we have offended and hurt.

FAQ FOUR

How do I forgive and forget?

While it still may be a commonly heard encouragement, forgive and forget is not biblical but actually a line from Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

It is not possible to forget a serious offence nor are we to forget it.

I vividly recall slipping a screwdriver into an electrical outlet when I was a child. I am not suppose to forget that feeling, which has made me more careful and respectful of electrical outlets my whole life. There are good reasons for my trust of others first to be verified. God expects us to use our experiences so to live more smartly and safely.

The biblical instruction is "**remember and forgive.**" As I remember God first forgiving me, I become more willing and able forgive others for their offense and hurt to me.

In Jesus' parable about the unforgiving debtor, a person was forgiven an enormous amount who, later, refuses to forgive a person owing him a considerably smaller debt. The "unforgiving debtor" is punished severely for not having remembered how he first had been forgiven (Matthew 18:23-35).

FAQ FIVE

How often must I forgive?

This is Peter's question to Jesus. Peter thought well of his generosity when he suggested that he would forgive even seven times! However, Jesus tells him there is no limit to **forgiveness**. Because God places no limit on forgiving us, we cannot put any limit of how much or how often we forgive others.

FAQ SIX

How do know if I am manipulating or forgiving?

When insincere and unresolved to forgive, telling someone that you forgive them can be a veiled attempt to return the hurt and has nothing to do with biblical **forgiveness** from the heart. *Intentions must be clear and pure.*

Insisting upon the admission of guilt from another is manipulation, not forgiveness. Remember, **forgiveness unleashes freedom**. When we seek God, we receive grace – power – that releases us from the anguish formerly binding us to the offender.

FAQ SEVEN

Won't withholding forgiveness simply give them a taste of their own hurt?

No. Withholding **forgiveness** does not hurt the person who hurt you, it only harms yourself. It likens ingesting poison that increasingly sickens the one offended and hurt and does little or nothing to harm the one who offended and hurt us.

Withholding **forgiveness** quickly fuels disappointment and anger. Unless we connect with God and practice **Forgiveness**, we are certain to become increasingly bitter in spirit, hardened in heart and, ultimately, left outside the heavenly banquet (Matthew 22:1-14). I recall a bumper sticker that said: "Forgive others because you deserve peace."

FAQ EIGHT

How can I possibly condone the wrong someone did to me?

You don't.

Forgiveness is not approval. As C.S. Lewis explains, some things are inexcusable. That means, they were wrong, are wrong and always will remain wrong. Nothing, however, is unforgiveable.