

Definition for Forgiveness

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What is a definition for forgiveness?

A definition for forgiveness could be -- giving up my right to hurt you, for hurting me. It is impossible to live on this fallen planet without getting hurt, offended, misunderstood, lied to, and rejected. Learning how to respond properly is one of the basics of the Christian life.

The word "forgive" means to wipe the slate clean, to pardon, to cancel a debt. When we wrong someone, we seek his or her forgiveness in order for the relationship to be restored. It is important to remember that forgiveness is not granted because a person deserves to be forgiven. Instead, it is an act of love, mercy, and grace.

How we act toward that person may change. It doesn't mean we will put ourselves back into a harmful situation or that we suddenly accept or approve of the person's continued wrong behavior. It simply means we release them from the wrong they committed against us. We forgive them because God forgave us (Ephesians 4:31-32 and Romans 5:8).

What does God say about forgiveness?

- The Bible gives us much instruction when it comes to forgiveness.
- We forgive because we have been forgiven by God (Ephesians 4:32).
- We forgive in obedience to God (Matthew 6:14-15; Romans 12:18).
- We forgive others to gain control of our lives from hurt emotions (Genesis 4:1-8).
- We forgive so we won't become bitter and defile those around us (Hebrews 12:14-15).

What if I don't feel like forgiving others?

There are times we don't feel like forgiving those who have wronged us. It is easier to act our way into feeling than to feel our way into acting. Having a nature of not forgiving others brings about bitterness, and bitterness has been linked to stress-related illnesses by some medical researchers. By forgiving others, we free ourselves spiritually and emotionally. Forgiveness is an act of our own personal will in obedience and submission to God's will, trusting God to bring emotional healing.

How can I help those struggling with forgiveness?

People who have experienced abuse, trauma, or loss need time to sort things out and let God bring them to the place of forgiveness in His time. God's timing is always the right time for each individual. The act of forgiving others is between us and God. The only time we need to forgive a person face-to-face is at the moment we are asked by that person to forgive them for the hurt they have caused.

There are things we can do to help those struggling with the forgiveness of others. We can support them with encouraging words and by listening to them. Taking our time and being gentle with them will allow them to progress through the steps of forgiveness the way God wants them to proceed.

A prayer of forgiveness

Dear God, I choose as an act of my will, regardless of my feelings, to forgive the person who has wronged me. I release them, and I set myself free to Your healing. With Your help, I will no longer dwell on the situation or continue to talk about it. I thank You for forgiving me as I have forgiven them. I thank You for releasing me. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.