

## Receiving and Releasing Forgiveness

*“Forgive us for our sins, just as we have forgiven those who sinned against us”* Matt 6:12

In the **“Lord’s Prayer”** Jesus instructs us on receiving forgiveness from God and the need to release forgiveness to others.

*And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors...  
For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*  
(Matthew 6:12,14-15)

**Forgiveness of sin is needed for two reasons.**

**First,**

We cannot get to heaven without our sin forgiven. This requires that we humble our hearts and accept that the only way to heaven is through the forgiveness that comes from the shed blood of Jesus.



**Second,**

As a child of God, we cannot have victory in our daily lives if we have unforgiven sin lurking in our hearts. For this daily life of victory, God requires both **releasing forgiveness** on those who sin against us and **receiving forgiveness** from the Father for our own sins and failures.

Here is how God forgives us and how we forgive others.

## Here is how God releases forgiveness



He recognizes that the penalty of our sins has been paid

*“In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death, and so we have forgiveness of sins.”*

(NCV Ephesians 1:7)

Jesus paid the penalty for all of mankind’s sin with His death on the cross. When we ask for forgiveness, God forgives us, because He recognizes our sin is fully paid. His only requirement is that we humble ourselves and ask.

**Jesus paid the full price for our sins**



He removes the offense from the person

*“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”* (NIV Psalm 103:12)

God separates what we have done wrong from who we are. He then takes our sin and removes it as far as possible from us. Our sin and failures do not define us any more, instead our relationship to God and our new identity in Christ defines who we are and how God sees us.

**God separates us from our sins and does not define us by our failures.**



He no longer remembers our sin

*“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*

(NIV Jeremiah 31:34)

God cannot forget – but He chooses not to remember. That means He does not go into our past, bring our past failures into the present and remind us of our broken past. We bring them up – and remind ourselves of our past failures. Satan brings them – to try to tie us to our broken past rather than to our present freedom.

**God chooses not to remember our forgiven sins!**

## We forgive others the way God forgives us.

God calls us to forgive others as He forgave us. We must follow the same three steps in forgiving others.

- **The penalty is paid**

The death of Jesus paid it all. We do not ask for any more payment for the wrongs we have suffered. We do not ask God to require more than the death of Jesus.

Society may require that a cost be paid – that is biblical.

If the person refuses to accept God’s provision for their sin, then they must pay the cost themselves – for eternity.

- **Separate the sin from the sinner**

We separate what the person did from who they are. We choose not to define a person by their failures and sin. Often this is the most difficult step to take. If they stole from us, we see them as a thief. If they abused us, we see them as an abuser.

God wants us to see people as He sees these people. They are created in His image, Jesus chose to die for each one of them, and they have an eternal future. Their sin does not define who they are – **unless they choose to allow that.**

We must see these people the same way.

- **Do not remember their failures**

In forgiving others, we choose to leave the failures in the past. Leaving them in the past does not mean we ignore the consequence of the sin, or choose not to learn from those things. Instead, we leave the accounting and bookkeeping to God to deal with. We choose not to let it define our present.

- **We release a blessing**

God keeps working in people’s lives because He wants to release a blessing to all mankind. He releases His blessing on the righteous and the unrighteous. He wants us to be people who do the same.

*“...not repaying evil with evil or insult with insult, but, on the contrary, with blessing. For it is to this that you have been called, so that you may receive a blessing.”* (1 Peter 3:9)

## Releasing and Receiving Forgiveness

### Releasing Forgiveness

#### Forgiveness must come from the heart.

Jesus gave a parable that shows how words of forgiveness are not enough – forgiveness must be released from our hearts. (Matthew 18:21-35).

#### What is forgiveness from the heart?

- forgiveness means a changed attitude

**We recognize** their sin is first against God – not us. (Psalm 51:4). **We remember** their sin against us is small compared to our sin against God. (Matt 18:33).

- It means being set free! (John 8:31-32)

Jesus says receiving God's forgiveness sets us free!

**Forgiving others** – frees us from finding justice – it recognizes God will deal justly with their sin.

**Receiving forgiveness** – sets us free from our sin.

- It means having God's heart for forgiveness

We must follow the three steps on releasing forgiveness just as God does for us (see other side).

#### How do I release forgiveness?

Forgiveness deals with specific things that people said about us or did against us. The list could be very long – it is best to ask God to help us. He will bring specific things done by people to our minds that He wants us to deal with.

So start with prayer asking God to speak and bring the specific people to our minds and the things they did that we need to forgive.

You can do it with each name God brings to mind, or you may need to use a pen and paper and make a list.

**In asking God for names of people to forgive, you may need to include:**

**Ourselves** – what we did to ourselves.

**God** – are we angry at what God allowed to happen to us?

This is a prayer that you can use for each person on your list.

#### A prayer of Forgiving others

Father, I forgive \_\_\_\_\_  
for doing \_\_\_\_\_.

In releasing forgiveness,

**I choose** to accept that the death of Jesus meets all of  
Your requirements for the forgiveness of this sin.

**I separate** what he/she did from who he/she is – **I  
choose** to love him/her even as I hate what he/she did.

**I choose** not to bring what he/she did to me back to  
remembrance. It is now only between You and  
him/her. I pray that he/she will seek forgiveness from  
You. In Jesus' name. Amen

### Receiving Forgiveness

When we finish this prayer – now we can ask God to release forgiveness for us. In the Lord's Prayer we ask God

***"forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us"***

Now take time to let the Father show us where we need forgiveness. For anything God shows us

**We confess** (say the same thing God says about it),  
**We repent** (turn from it and ask forgiveness).

#### A Prayer for Forgiveness

Father, You have said in Your word – ***"If we  
confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will  
forgive us our sins and purify us from all  
unrighteousness."*** (1 John 1:9). As I have failed in

\_\_\_\_\_ and confess that it  
violates Your truth, forgive me because Jesus paid  
the price for this sin. Your promise is You will  
remove it from me and will never bring it to Your  
remembrance again. Thank You!!

When satan or anyone else brings it up – I know it  
is not from You. I will never let it take away my  
joy, my peace, or my love for You. In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

## FAQs on Forgiveness

### Why do we have to forgive?

- We forgive because Jesus commanded us to forgive (Matthew 6:5-15).
- We forgive because it enables our heart to receive God's forgiveness (Luke 18:25).
- Forgiveness leaves us free to move forward as a child of God – it acknowledges that God can deal with the other person and their sin however He chooses (Luke 23:34).

### Are Forgiveness and Reconciliation the same thing?

- No. Forgiveness must precede reconciliation.
- Forgiveness is something we release whether the person asks for it, is around to receive it, or is worthy of it (Luke 23:34).
- Reconciliation seeks to restore broken relationships. Between people, it requires all sides acknowledging failure, releasing and receiving forgiveness and acknowledging the wounding all have experienced. Reconciliation then begins the process of regaining trust and re-establishing relationship. It takes time.

### Have I forgiven someone if I say "I forgive" – but do not feel any different?

- Forgiveness is an act of the will – we choose to release or receive forgiveness (Matthew 18:21,22).
- Often (usually) our emotions take time to catch up with our will when we choose to forgive.
- If our emotions never seem to "get over a wounding", then we need to ask God to search our hearts. Something is stopping us from having His heart for that person.

### When I say "I forgive you", what does that do?

- All offense is first of all against God – and complete forgiveness must come from God. He does that through the blood of Jesus (Psalm 51:3,4).
- Any relationship can receive a measure of healing when we release forgiveness to the other person.
- Forgiveness opens the door so reconciliation can get started – it does not guarantee reconciliation will happen.