

Forgiveness

I'm curious about...forgiveness. Great! You have the right piece of paper in your hands. We have taken the time to put this together so you can understand what the Bible says about forgiveness. You'll also have a chance to dig into the Bible for yourself!

Definition

Forgiveness is an active decision to let go of the resentment you hold toward a person because of how they've hurt you in the past. It is telling the other person, "You have hurt me, but I no longer hold it against you."

Why should we forgive?

When we are hurt, it is normal to respond negatively in anger or bitterness. We may want to strike back. We could feel like we are owed something. Sometimes we take "comfort" in thinking about how horrible the other person is. When these types of reactions come naturally to us, why should we forgive?

To put it simply, we forgive because God commands us to. It's an act of obedience. In Matthew 16:14-15, Jesus says, "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Following Jesus Christ and having a forgiving attitude go hand-in-hand. Why does Jesus want us to do something that's so difficult?

What are the benefits of forgiveness?

Holding a grudge hurts us more than anyone else. Forgiving those who hurt us is actually the best thing we can do for our own hearts. It's not the easiest thing, but it's the only thing. Nursing a grudge is like slowly sipping poison and the longer we hold on, the sicker we become.

A grudge becomes like a prison. Your thoughts and feelings hostage, trapped in self-pity and destructive anger. The only way to escape is to let go and forgive. Unfortunately, forgiving someone isn't a one time thing, every time the bitterness creeps back on to the scene, we have to forgive again...and again.

How do I forgive someone?

Forgiveness begins by remembering how much God has forgiven us. Why? When we realize how much we've blown it, we are more compassionate toward others. Here is a hard truth: God has forgiven each of us more than we will have to forgive one another.

When we forget how much God has forgiven us, it becomes harder to forgive others. Why? We think, "I'd never do anything like that! I can't forgive that person."

After looking "up" to God and "in" at your own heart, it's time to look "out" to the person who hurt you. You may need to tell the person that you forgive them. This is often the case, but not always.

Forgiveness isn't the same thing as trust. We need to forgive others, no matter what, but we don't need to keep trusting them. God doesn't want us to be hurt over and over again by the same person.

Commit all of this to prayer, and God will strengthen you. This is a difficult practice, but necessary for the spiritual life of joy and fulfillment.

What else does the Bible say about forgiveness?

If you want to know more about forgiveness, you should check out the following Bible verses: Matthew 6:12, Luke 17:4, Luke 23:24, 1 John 1:9, Colossians 3:13.