

The Practical Path of Forgiveness

Key Text: Colossians 3:12–15 (ESV)

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."

1. Putting Off vs. Putting On

- Colossians 3:1–11 addresses putting off former vices (anger, lying, pride, lust).
- Colossians 3:12–15 emphasizes putting on godly virtues (mercy, humility, patience, love).

Key Truth: The Christian life is not just about leaving the past behind—it is about stepping into who God has called us to be.

2. The Danger of Unforgiveness

Luke 17:1–6 – Jesus teaches repeated forgiveness.

- Unforgiveness becomes a stumbling block.
- It turns a wound into a mindset.
- It holds us hostage to the past.

Hebrews 12:15 – “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.”

- What begins as pain can turn into poison if not dealt with.
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3. Lessons from Roots

1. **Roots grow underground** – hidden bitterness can exist beneath the surface.
2. **Roots spread silently** – unforgiveness affects other relationships and even your relationship with God.
3. **Roots draw nourishment** – bitterness grows when we replay offenses or talk about them repeatedly.
 - Solution: Be rooted in Christ (John 15:4–5).

4. **Roots anchor deeply** – the longer bitterness remains, the harder it is to remove.
 5. **Roots determine the fruit** –
 - Bitterness produces anger, gossip, division.
 - Forgiveness produces love, peace, joy, unity.
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4. Practical Steps to Forgive (Matthew 18:15–20)

1. Pray and seek God’s will; fasting can help weaken the power of the flesh.
 2. Release the offense if possible, even without confronting the person.
 3. Have a direct conversation with the offender when necessary.
 4. Bring two or three neutral witnesses if the issue is unresolved.
 5. Follow the church discipline process as a last step if repentance is refused.
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5. Illustration

In many parts of the country, whole groves of ash trees are dying from the emerald ash borer. At first, the trees look healthy, but the insect quietly destroys the tree from the inside.

Bitterness works in the same way: it may not be obvious on the outside, but it slowly destroys the soul if not addressed.

Reflection and Application

- What “roots” of bitterness may be hidden in your life?
- How can you replace bitterness with Christ-centered forgiveness?
- Who do you need to forgive today?