



## **CHRISTIAN COUNSELING SERIES**

**(CLASS #4)**

### ***Counseling Topic: “FORGIVENESS”***

***Introduction:*** A Christian doctor carried out an interesting survey recently involving his patients. As they waited in the waiting room, they were asked to fill out a little survey on themselves. One of the questions asked was “What is your number one wish?” On analyzing the answers the doctor found that the number one wish of 67% of his patients was to have peace of mind.

***> Let us learn about FORGIVENESS for peace of mind, what is forgiveness? According to the Nelson’s Bible Dictionary FORGIVENESS is:***

**(1) To pardon; to give up resentment of; to cease to feel resentment against.**

**(2) The act of excusing or pardoning another in spite of his slights, shortcomings, and errors.**

As a theological term, forgiveness refers to God's pardon of the sins of human beings. **No religious book except the Bible teaches that God completely forgives sin** (Psalms 51:1,9; Isaiah 38:17; Hebrews 10:17). The initiative comes from Him (John 3:16; Colossians 2:13) because He is ready to forgive (Luke 15:11-32). He is a God of grace and pardon (Nehemiah 9:17; Daniel 9:9).

Sin deserves divine punishment because it is a violation of God's holy character (Genesis 2:17; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Peter 1:16), but His pardon is gracious (Psalms 130:4; Romans 5:6-8). In order for God to forgive sin, two conditions are necessary. A life must be taken as a substitute for that of the sinner (Leviticus 17:11,14; Hebrews 9:22), and the sinner must come to God's sacrifice in a spirit of repentance and faith (Mark 1:4; Acts 10:43; James 5:15).

Forgiveness in the New Testament is directly linked to Christ (Acts 5:31; Colossians 1:14), His sacrificial death on the cross (Romans 4:24), and His resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:15). He was the morally perfect sacrifice (Romans 8:3), the final and ultimate fulfillment of all Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews 9:11-10:18). Since He bore the law's death penalty against sinners (Galatians 3:10-13), those who trust in His sacrifice are freed from that penalty. By faith sinners are forgiven-"justified" in Paul's terminology (Romans 3:28; Galatians

**3:8-9). Those who are forgiven sin's penalty also die to its controlling power in their lives (Romans 6).**

**Christ's resurrection was more than proof of His deity or innocence; it was related in a special way to His forgiveness. Christ's resurrection was an act by which God wiped out the false charges against Him; it was God's declaration of the perfect righteousness of His Son, the Second Adam, and of His acceptance of Christ's sacrifice (1 Timothy 3:16). Because He has been acquitted and declared righteous, this is also true for those whom He represents. Thus, Christ's resurrection was a necessary condition for the forgiveness of man's sins (1 Corinthians 15:12-28). To be forgiven is to be identified with Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection.**

**Christ has the authority to forgive sins (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 9:11-10:18). This forgiveness is an essential part of the gospel message (Acts 2:38; 5:31). But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (attributing to Satan a deed done by Jesus through the power of God's Spirit) is an unpardonable sin (Mark 3:28-29) - not because God cannot or will not forgive such a sin but because such a hard-hearted person has put himself beyond the possibility of repentance and faith. (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)**

**> Let us learn Five Principles of Forgiveness:**

**~ Principle #1 – We need Personal Forgiveness - Luke 23:32-43 - *There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Christ seed of forgiveness produces God's paradise for you!)***

- **One of our greatest needs in life is forgiveness!** – According to Jesus in Matthew 9:1-8 - *So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.*

- Ask Christ to forgive you of your sins and invite Him into your heart today if you have not already done so. What does this forgiveness/salvation give you? Paul experienced it, he writes in Romans 5:1-2 - *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

- Let us fully understand that God has forgiven your past, present, and future sins, again Paul encourages us in Romans 8:1 - *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

~ **Principle #2 – We need to Pray for Forgiveness - Matthew 6:9-15** - Pray for personal forgiveness, pray to forgive others! (v12) - Powerful prayer (v14-15)

- Galatians 2:20- *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

- **Observe Stephen's powerful prayer of forgiveness - Acts 7:54-60** - *When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

- June Hunt writes in her book on counseling, "Notice the word *forgiveness* has the little word *give* in it. When you choose to forgive, you give someone a gift—freedom from having to pay the penalty for offending you. Because this can be a difficult gift to give, realize you are also giving yourself a gift—the gift of grudge-free living. That is true freedom!

- We read Leviticus 19:18 – *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.*

~ Principle #3 – We must Practice Forgiveness - Matthew 18:21-22 - *Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

- How many times LORD? – 490 TIMES, actually forgiveness is a way of life!

- Jay Adams writes in his book the *Christian Counselors Handbook* - "Forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting immediately, then, but it does involve a commitment not to raise the issue again. Biblical forgiveness also involves the promise to avoid holding the offense over the offender's head, the promise to tell no one else about it, and the promise not to dwell on it oneself. As one consciously and prayerfully avoids such practices, he discovers that increasingly it becomes possible to forget. Indeed, there is no other way to forget. Granting forgiveness, then, does not produce instant forgetfulness, but rather entails the promise to adopt attitudes and practices that will lead to forgetting." The scripture says in 1 Peter 4:8 - *"love will cover a multitude of sins."*

- Jesus relates a story on an unforgiving heart in His follow-up with Peter's question on forgiveness, let us continue our reading of Matthew 18:23-35.

- Warren Wiersbe comments on an unforgiving heart by saying, "The world's worst prison is the prison of an unforgiving heart. If we refuse to forgive others, then we are only imprisoning ourselves and causing our own torment. Some of the most miserable people I have met in my ministry have been people who would not forgive others. They lived only to imagine ways to punish these people who had wronged them. But they were really only punishing themselves."

- The Master's University published this information on UNFORGIVENESS: Unforgiveness is a choice to hold onto anger and resentment toward someone who has hurt you. It's like clinging to a heavy burden, refusing to let go. But what does it really mean to harbor unforgiveness?

1. **Emotional Shackles**: When you refuse to forgive, you remain imprisoned in the past. The pain caused by the offense stays alive, and the wound never heals. **You find yourself replaying the hurt, making yourself progressively angrier.**
2. **Spiritual Impact**: Unforgiveness is contrary to God's will. It affects your emotions, thoughts, prayers, and relationships. **Scripture teaches us to forgive, recognizing that we ourselves have been forgiven a much larger debt of sin by God.**
3. **Physical and Emotional Toll**: Unforgiveness can eat you alive. It affects your health, happiness, and relationships. **Recognize the signs and consider forgiveness with mindfulness, acceptance, and gratitude.**

**Remember, forgiveness isn't about excusing the offense—it's about freeing yourself from the chains of bitterness.**

**- The Mayo Clinic Staff published an article entitled:**

***"Forgiveness: Letting Go of grudges and bitterness"* let me read to you some excerpts:**

**- (article begins) Who hasn't been hurt by the actions or words of another? Perhaps a parent constantly criticized you growing up, a colleague sabotaged a project or your partner had an affair. Or maybe you've had a traumatic experience, such as being physically or emotionally abused by someone close to you. These wounds can leave lasting feelings of resentment, bitterness and anger — sometimes even hatred.**

**But if you hold on to that pain, you might be the one who pays most dearly. By embracing forgiveness, you also can embrace peace and hope. Consider how forgiveness can lead you down the path of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.**

**- Forgiveness doesn't mean forgetting or excusing the harm done to you. It also doesn't necessarily mean making up with the person who caused the harm. Forgiveness brings a kind of peace that allows you to focus on yourself and helps you go on with life.**

**- What are the benefits of forgiving someone?**

**Letting go of grudges and bitterness can make way for improved health and peace of mind. Forgiveness can lead to:**

- **Healthier relationships.**
- **Improved mental health.**
- **Less anxiety, stress, and hostility.**

- Fewer symptoms of depression.
- Lower blood pressure.
- A stronger immune system.
- Improved heart health.
- Improved self-esteem.

- What are the effects of holding a grudge?

If you struggle with finding forgiveness, you might:

- Bring anger and bitterness into new relationships and experiences.
- Become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present.
- Become depressed, irritable, or anxious.
- Feel at odds with your spiritual beliefs.
- Lose valuable and enriching connections with others.

- Jesus gave us good counsel on forgiveness being an act of our will in Matthew 5:23-24 - Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Colossians 3:1-17)

- The process to remedy the malady "5- R's":

- (1) Recognize your sins before God & others
- (2) Repent of your sins before God & others
- (3) Be Reconciled to God & others
- (4) Resolve not to do it again
- (5) Restoration! James 5:16 - Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

~ Principle #4 – We have the Promise of Forgiveness - Colossians 2:13-15

- *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

1 John 1:5-2:2 - *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not*

*practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

*- Proverbs 28:13 - He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

*- In a hymn John Newton the slave trader, who was saved by God's "Amazing Grace" describes the transforming power of Christ:*

*In evil long I took delight,  
Unawed by shame or fear,  
Till a new object struck my sight,  
And stopped my wild career.  
I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agony and blood;  
He fixed His loving eyes on me,  
As near His cross I stood.  
How can it be, upon a tree  
The Savior died for Me?  
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled,  
To think He died for me.*

*~ Principle #5 – We must Preach Forgiveness - Acts 5:29-32 - But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

*- Acts 26:14-18 - And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to*

*light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'*

**- Let us end by reading King David's repentance and forgiveness in Psalm 51.**