

Five Steps of Forgiveness

1. EMPTY THE GARBAGE CAN — We are like human garbage compactors... someone hurts us and we stuff it, someone else hurts us and we stuff that, and again someone else wrongs us in another way and we do the same. We do this until the time when our can gets so full that seemingly some very small and insignificant event makes the whole thing spill over, and God help the person who happens to be there when it does. What a mess, and unfortunately, what a clean up is needed. The remedy? Empty the can when it has something in it. Even with small amounts of garbage, if left there long enough it starts to smell, and you don't want to smell bad do you? The way we do this is simple. At a time alone, preferably during a quiet time with the Lord while walking through the Tabernacle, we will speak to the person who wronged us, just as if they were there, telling them all they have done to us. This may take two seconds or two hours, but whatever the case, we do it until we have gotten out that which we need to.

2. SPEAK OUT FORGIVENESS FROM THE HEART — Once we have spoken out the wrong(s) done to us, as best we can, from our hearts, we say something like, 'Even though you have done this to me, I forgive you.' This is only the second step however, and there's three more to go.... hmmm, I wonder why?

3. ASK THE LORD TO FORGIVE THE PERSON — Jesus, while hanging on the Cross, gave us a wonderful example of forgiveness when He said, "Father forgive them, they don't know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) This is important for a couple of reasons: (a) It is a recognition of the relationship between myself and God, and truly whatever I bind on earth, will be bound in heaven. (b) It is like a test step. I have found people who don't want God to forgive, they want Him to remember. 'Vengeance is yours Lord, vengeance is yours!' All of a sudden, they are Old Testaments scholars. They may start quoting some of their favorite Psalms, which in a paraphrase may say something like, 'Rip their eyes out, oh God, ... pull out their toe nails my Rock and my Redeemer,' something like that. Unfortunately, I don't believe that's what Jesus had in mind. What we are

supposed to be doing is asking God to release them from the wrongs they have done to us, even though we may have a hard time saying as Jesus did "...they don't know what they are doing." We want to say 'yes they do, oh, yes they do.' The reality is they really don't. If they truly knew the implications, the effects physically, psychological and spiritually, especially to themselves, they wouldn't have.

4. ASK THE LORD TO FORGIVE YOU FOR YOUR UN-FORGIVENESS — Un-forgiveness is a sin...right? Oooops! We sometimes forget that, and as such it separates us from God and the things He wants to bless us with. Jesus is the model; He is the Word of God we look to, to know if we are hitting the mark. He forgave and forgave freely, to the point of dying for those who put Him on the Cross...wow! We then are to do the same. When we don't, we are not reflecting Him and we have missed the mark, we have sinned. Even this He died for, my cold and calloused heart caught in the grips of un-forgiveness.

5. PRAY BLESSING ON THE PERSON — Here is another opportunity to practice the Word of God. In Luke 6:28, Jesus says, "bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you," and later He says in Luke 6:38b, "...For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." It is here that we find the courage to do the very thing that will be as the healing balm over our wounds. That's why when I say to pray for the person who wronged you, it doesn't mean to pray those "two by four prays." The "go get them, oh Lord," or "You know they need You, oh God," type prayers. No, pray blessing and prosperity over the person. Pray for them what they took away from you. If they took relationship from you, pray that their relationships would be fulfilling and rich. If they stole from you, pray that they would prosper monetarily, and have all their needs met. With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you...what a promise and motivation to give-away that which I am in need of, just to experience God's favor in seeing it returned back to me. In the mean time, how freeing, and what healing is experienced in putting into practice that which God has already done for me.