

attitude of not just getting even but getting revenge. Vengeance destroys your relationship with God, others and yourself. God teaches us to love and vengeance is not for us as followers of Christ.

STEP FIVE: FORGIVENESS

When the previous steps have been resolved, true forgiveness can occur. It is both an act of love toward God, yourself, and to others. It is first an act of love to God because He calls us to forgive as He has forgiven us. Love is shown toward yourself, because you are no longer a victim but have taken steps to see areas for growth and maturity as a believer in Christ. Lastly, forgiveness allows others to see the love of Christ which is a testimony of His powerful love, being shown through the wholeness of who Christ desires you to be. Jesus called this life the “abundant life”.

GOING FURTHER RESOURCES

Recommended Books:

Healing is a Choice
by Steve Arterburn

The Search for Significance
By Robert McGee

Just Like Jesus
By Max Lucado

The Secrets We Keep
By John Eckeberger

Life's Healing Choices
By John Baker

Healing the Hurt
By Dr. Gary and Barbara Rosberg



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LEARNING TO FORGIVE

FiT Tips



Learning to Forgive

From Larry Grimes, Business Administrator

Jesus said, “And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, I repent, forgive him.” (Luke 17:4). Paul wrote, “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Both of these passages seem so pleasant and easy until the pain of life comes our way. In those times forgiveness does not seem to come so easily, especially when the one who has created pain in our life is someone who we thought we could totally trust. The intimacy we had with them now seems to be destroyed, never to return. However, God knows the power of forgiveness. The lessons forgiveness teaches us about true intimacy and the growth that is available in these most difficult times, should be discovered so our faith can mature and our life not be destroyed. Renowned Christian Psychiatrist Karl Menninger established a model of forgiveness that is more of a process by the victim than an instant event. It should also be viewed as stuck points that can create havoc in future relationships.

STEP ONE: CLAIM THE HURT

It seems like this would be simple to accomplish, but often people want to ignore the pain by stuffing it and living in denial. Why is this a problem? Unrecognized pain continues to generate a lack of trust in relationships. Trust issues created by hurt impact a person’s ability to move toward

intimacy with the person who created the pain. Even if the person who created the pain is no longer in relationship with the person who was hurt, often these issues of trust get projected toward anyone who has the same or similar role in that person’s life. We all tend to want pleasure, which is positive, and avoid pain. Avoidant behavior we display may look like we are ignoring the situation, hiding it, or stuffing it. However, no matter how we may respond, these are all defense mechanisms used as an attempt to avoid or protect us from pain.

STEP TWO: GUILT

Once you are willing to recognize the pain and take full responsibility for dealing with the loss, the next stage to follow in the forgiveness process is guilt. The person begins to feel responsible for what happened in the relationship. Questions arise such as, “What could I have done to prevent what happened”, or “If only I hadn’t...” While this is a normal part of the forgiveness process, it is important that it not become a stage of self-deprecation. As a believer in Jesus Christ, our value is found in Christ not in doing everything perfectly. Passages such as Romans 8:35-39, which speaks of the inseparable love of Christ, and Romans 8:26-28, which lets us know all situations we experience can be turned into good through His redemptive power, become truth to instill in our mind.

STEP THREE: THE VICTIM

Unless guilt is removed through truth, the next stage of feeling like a victim moves in. One

begins to feel powerless in this stage of forgiveness. Other signs shown during this stage include depression, loneliness, isolation, and even bitterness. Often people begin to deal with these types of feelings by numbing them through the use of alcohol, drugs, food and even risky or immoral behavior. However, these attempts only temporarily relieve or numb the pain only to have the feelings return later. This stage is a cry for help. It should alarm us of the need to get someone’s help, or to begin to look outside of ourselves and help others. Being a victim can become a habitual way of handling relationships for the person who is stuck in this danger zone.

STEP FOUR: ANGER

Scripture says, “Be angry and do not sin”, Ephesians 4:26. Somehow, we have taken on the belief that anger is wrong or sinful, but anger is not necessarily bad. Anger can help motivate us to change or take an action, even if the action is something we would rather not do, although it is something we should do. It can even provide the energy to move toward forgiveness. However, anger becomes sin when it becomes focused on unhealthy results such as bitterness or vengeance. This same passage in Ephesians 4 goes on to say in verses 26-27, “do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil”. What does giving no opportunity to the devil mean? It means not allowing the anger to drive you toward getting even, or hurting someone more than they hurt you. This can result in having an **(continued on back)**