



Do you have something against someone?

How can I forgive and forget? – Forgiveness frees both parties!

*Dear Andrew,**

Sometimes, it is difficult to forgive. From a human point of view, it can sometimes even be impossible. But with God's help it is possible. Today, we will consider the following questions:

- Why should we forgive others?
- How do I receive divine strength to forgive?
- How can I determine if I have really forgiven someone?
- What effect does it have on me and others when I forgive them?

An Experience of Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci painted the world-famous painting of “The Last Supper”. It depicts Jesus and His disciples at their last supper together. When Leonardo was painting this picture, he got into an argument with another artist.

He became bitter and wanted to get revenge. So, he used the other artist's face as Judas. He wanted to brand him by depicting him as the betrayer of Jesus.

Sometime later, when Leonardo wanted to paint the face of Jesus, he couldn't seem to make any progress. Something seemed to hinder his greatest efforts. Finally, the thought came to him that maybe the problem had to do with his revenge on the other artist. Do you know what he did?

He painted over Judas' face and then tried again to paint the face of Jesus. This time he succeeded so well that we have marveled about this picture for generations.

This is a lesson for us. As long as we “paint faces of Judas” with feelings of resentment or bitterness, the Spirit of God cannot really introduce us to Jesus. However, the relationship to Him determines our life (1 John 5:12).

*This name was selected to remind us of the biblical Andrew, who led his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42).

A Fundamental Problem in our Life

A fundamental problem in our life is to receive forgiveness for our own sins and shortcomings as well as to forgive other people for their sins and shortcomings.

Forgiveness is not only an important spiritual matter, but it also has serious effects on our mind, our health, our relationships and our happiness.

In letter no. 16 I wrote to you in detail how we can receive forgiveness for ourselves.¹ Hence, we will now take a look at how, when and why we can and should forgive others. Amazingly enough, it has good effects on both parties. More about that later.

What Jesus taught about receiving forgiveness and forgiving others

“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. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents [The amount of 10,000 talents is equivalent to \$ 6-7.000.000.-].

But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii [this amount is equivalent to \$ 10.-/12.-]; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:21-35 NKJV)

¹ Letter to Andrew No. 16: *How can I obtain God's love and forgiveness? How do I receive forgiveness? How can my problem of guilt be resolved?*

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Can guilt that has been forgiven return? If yes, why?

In this parable Jesus speaks about receiving forgiveness for ourselves and forgiving others. There was a man with millions in debts. The king cancelled this great debt. Now, the man, who had so generously been shown grace, refuses to forgive a debtor a small sum. This man had experienced immeasurable forgiveness and yet wasn't prepared to forgive someone else even a little bit. This ratio was almost 1:1 million.

The generous king in this story represents God. God forgives those who trust His grace from immeasurable guilt. It is a matter of the guilt from my whole life. Due to this great forgiveness, the Lord expects us to forgive our debtors their relatively small guilt.

Jesus shows us that our guilt toward God is a millionfold greater than any guilt another person can have towards us. The guilt you and I have towards God is the debt of millions. What individual people do to us is the small debt. What did the king do with this hardhearted man?

Because he wasn't willing to forgive this small debt, the millions were again demanded from him. And since he couldn't pay it, it was over for him. This ratio of 1:1 million shows us what great fools we are, when we don't forgive other people, because our loss is much greater than the other persons.

"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:35 NKJV)

What Jesus said here applies to all of us. There are no exceptions. It pertains to you and me.

Experience: A burden returned

An older woman had gotten in touch with us. She was in great distress. She had been by a fortune teller many years before. As a result, she suffered from a fear of curses. We showed her the way to Jesus. She confessed all the sins of her life to God, which she could remember. After this, we prayed for her deliverance. She was immediately made free. But some time later, this burden returned. What had happened? She had met a woman on the street, who had once done something terrible to her. She didn't want to forgive her. She would rather perish than forgive her. Thus, Satan was able to defeat her. Her burden returned. We prayed that she would be willing to forgive. After two weeks, the time finally came. The Lord delivered her again and from this time on she remained free.

If this woman would have hung onto the sin of irreconcilability, then she would not only still had her burden, which daily caused her big problems, but she would have also had many additional difficulties and also lost eternal life. The wonderful thing is that God can give us the power to forgive. Jesus is the victor. He also wants to give us victory.

Why should we forgive?

It is Jesus' command: *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."* (Mark 11:25 NKJV)

God forgives our great guilt. He says to us: *"I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."* (Isaiah 44:22 NKJV)

By not forgiving, we risk losing our own forgiveness, which we have received from God or hope to receive. In addition, we ruin our own character. Not forgiving can have one or more of the following effects on us:

- › nondescript fear
- › depressed moods
- › a feeling of listlessness
- › loss of initiative
- › hate
- › aggressive behavior
- › sleeplessness
- › headaches, migraines
- › stomach ulcers
- › loneliness
- › contact problems

Not forgiving can be compared to storing toxic waste. Eventually, the drums are rusted through and the poison spreads out. That is what happens when we don't forgive. It stealthily destroys our life.

We should also forgive, because not forgiving impairs fellowship; yes, it can even destroy it. True fellowship with God and man are closely connected (1 John 4:20). When I withhold my forgiveness from someone, then I am simultaneously calling into question my fellowship with them and God.

A Fundamental Matter

Is forgiveness only expected from me, when someone comes and confesses to me? What if someone never repents and confesses?

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." (Luke 17:3-4 NKJV)

When someone comes and confesses it is obvious that God expects us to forgive. "Rebuke him" means "gently restoring someone." And Jesus' statement shows us: We should accept their word. By the third time wouldn't we say: I don't believe a word you say anymore?

The other case: *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have **anything against anyone**, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."* (Mark 11:25 NKJV)

Here, it has to do with **forgiveness before God**, when no one comes, repents and confesses. The Lord also expects this. Whether we receive forgiveness or not even depends on this. However, a conversation might be necessary here. In such a conversation, it has to do with opening the eyes of the other person to their wrong path and encouraging them to turn back.

Later, we will see how Jesus and Stephen practiced forgiveness before God.

The great import of forgiveness before God

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:

“Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Corinthians 2:10-11 NKJV)

Satan wants to cause us to fall by not forgiving. We want to avoid this under all circumstances.

The apostle Paul describes forgiveness, when no one comes to confess, as *“forgiveness in the presence of Christ”*. We can also call this “forgiveness before God”.

These words were written by the Austrian poet, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach:

*We should always forgive.
The penitent for his sake,
the impenitent for our sake.*

It says the following in the valuable book “Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing”: “He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness.”²

How do I obtain divine strength to forgive?

God is love (1 John 4:8). The result of His love is goodness, mercy and patience. It says in Psalms 103:8-13 (NKJV), also called *“Praise for the Lord’s Mercies”*:

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.”

We can clearly see here that forgiveness is founded on the selfless love of God. *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, **for He will abundantly pardon.**”* (Isaiah 55:7 NKJV)

By claiming this promise, we may ask for and receive the infinite treasure of forgiveness from God’s power to forgive. God will give it to us.

² E.G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 113.3, egwwritings.org

My first prayer experience using promises from the Bible

It took place in my early years as a pastor. I was travelling several days on business. When I came home, I went through my mail. Among the mail was a letter from my superior in Munich. Included in the envelope was a copy of a letter from a member of my church in Regensburg. He had written my superior telling him that I hadn't attended to something. I immediately knew that this was a mistake, since I had taken care of the matter. My first thought the next morning was: Why did this church member write to Munich instead of talking with me? I didn't want to be angry with him, but after a while I noticed that I had developed unpleasant feelings towards him. So, I prayed the following prayer:

Prayer

"Father in heaven, You know about this letter. You know that it is a mistake. You also know that I don't want to be angry with this brother, but I have noticed that isn't the case. Please forgive me for this. Thank You that You have already forgiven me, because Your Word says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 NKJV) But Father, I have another problem. I still have these unpleasant feelings in my heart and I can't get rid of them. I constantly have to think about it. I ask You to take them away from me. Because Your Word says: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36 NKJV) I thank You that You have already taken these feelings away. Please, be with this brother and help him with this situation. Please help me to love him with all my heart. I praise You and thank You for Your help. Amen.

How did this experience end? After I prayed, I went about my work. About an hour later, when I thought about the matter I knew all the details. But it no longer internally burdened me. During the Sabbath school lesson on the next Sabbath, I was able to tactfully mention that I had taken care of that specific matter. During the break the brother came to me and wanted to apologize. I said to him: "I know what you want to tell me. Everything is alright." We then shook each other's hand. When we said our goodbyes after the church service, we looked a moment longer in each other's eyes. We were both happy again.

Several years ago, I read a book which really impressed me.³ I want to share some thoughts from it:

Why were their prayers not answered?

A retired missionary to Africa was a guest at Katharina and Leonhard's home. He said to them: "You mentioned that a number of unanswered prayers are bothering you. I have discovered in my life that an attitude of forgiveness is a condition for my prayers being answered."

He continued: "Some years ago I went through a phase where power was missing in my prayers and so I prayed: 'Lord, I don't have enough faith. Please give me more faith.' Then I realized that it wasn't my faith, but rather my reservations, blame and prejudice against a lot of people. This was the problem and the reason why my prayers weren't answered."

I think we all agree that not forgiving means having something against someone. Jesus said: *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."* (Mark 11:25 NKJV) Jesus' commission is that we forgive.

Who is "anyone"? What is "anything"?

Anyone! It can only mean: someone, everyone, without exception. And what does anything mean? It means something, no matter what it is; everything, whatever it may be, without exception. Forgive, when you have anything against anyone.

When I feel that someone has done an injustice to me, then I should forgive them. It may be that the injustice was real or that I might only feel that way. The other person might not even see it as an injustice. Maybe it wasn't even one, but that is how I see it. I might even inform the other person of my forgiveness and they say to me: I don't even know what you would have to forgive me for.

Jesus asks us to forgive every single injustice and any wrong done to us. In the Lord's prayer there is a dangerous request:

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12 NKJV)

³ Catherine Marshall, *Step by Step*, Friedrich Bahn Verlag, chapter 3; out of print.

The explanation following the Lord's prayer says: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15 NKJV)

Ralph Luther comments: "Our debtors are not only those, who have explicitly offended us, but all people, who are guilty of not being compassionate, considerate, helpful, grateful, friendly or anything else. We are to forgive them of their guilt."⁴

When should we forgive?

"And whenever you stand praying, ... forgive him." (Mark 11:25 NKJV) According to Jesus, we should forgive during our next prayer. What should we do, if we aren't willing yet? Then we can pray for the willingness and strength we need. God is waiting to help us. The prayer can be worded something like this adjoining prayer:

(I would like to make a recommendation: When you pray this prayer, then pray aloud. We can concentrate much better this way. The Bible texts in parentheses don't need to be said while praying.)

Prayer

"Father in heaven, You expect us to forgive. I know that You don't expect anything from me, which You don't give me the strength for. I want to forgive. But I not quite willing yet. So, I ask You to please forgive me and take away this flaw in my heart. Jesus said: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36 NKJV) So, I ask You to free me from this lack of willingness to forgive. Thank You that You have already answered my request."

You can continue:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7 NKJV) Please give me as much divine strength to forgive as I need in this situation. Since this is a request according to Your will, I thank You that You have already answered my prayer (1 John 5:14-15) and given me the strength to forgive."

⁴ Dictionary for the New Testament, p. 264-265, under the word "forgiveness" (between people).

Jesus and Stephen both “forgave before God”

Jesus personally practiced this. He prayed on the cross without anyone coming and asking for forgiveness: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* (Luke 23:34 NKJV) Till this day, no one has suffered such a terrible injustice as did our Lord Jesus. Jesus immediately forgave them and interceded for them in prayer as well.

Stephen practiced it as well, as he was being stoned to death: *“Then he [Stephen] knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’”* (Acts 7:60 NKJV) This means then: Lord, I forgive them and You please forgive them too!

How can I deal with the many “anythings” I have against “anyones”?

After the visit from the missionary to Africa, Katharina and Leonhard started to systematically remove and do away with their “anythings” against many “anyones”. How did they do that? Every morning they each took a half hour to write down all their accusations, blame and reservations that they had against others. Afterwards, they joined each other in prayer fellowship to forgive their fellow men.

They realized that they needed to openly confess and clean up their past as much as possible, if they wanted to live in complete freedom. The marvelous freedom of God’s children is connected to forgiveness: It makes us free to forgive. The forgiveness from Christ is demonstrated in granting forgiveness to my neighbors.

They started as far back in their past as they could remember. Every morning they went over a different portion of their lives. In doing so, they discovered people and situations that had been well-hidden in their subconscious. They went through their childhood and on through the rest of their lives. They brought all their resentment before God and placed it in His forgiveness. When they got to the present, they discovered that they had troubled relationships with certain people, which had been concealed under certain pretexts:

- › He/she isn’t my type.
- › I think I am allergic to this person.
- › Oh, I don’t know, but somehow it always sizzles in a bad way between us.
- › I prefer to avoid this person.

They realized that these are invalid in Jesus’ eyes. So, they decided in a manner of speaking to internally release these people, whether they were their type or not. Maybe it can be expressed like this: They forgave them for being different than what they (Katharina and Leonhard) wanted them to be. Katharina and Leonhard discovered that this decluttering opened the way for loving people. *“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36 NKJV)

Have we already let ourselves be freed from reservations, accusations, resentment, prejudice and not forgiving in every manner? Jesus can free us so that we can forgive and love. Whoever doesn’t forgive is a prisoner. They constantly have to think about the other person.

Forgiveness makes us free. I think in a way it also frees the person I have forgiven. The other person senses this somehow – that the atmosphere has been cleared or changed.

Can my “forgiveness before God” cause a change in others?

The old missionary to Africa was convinced that when he forgave other people that it led to God impacting their lives in a concrete manner. At first, Katharina and Leonhard didn't really believe that their confession and prayer would bring positive changes to the lives of the people concerned. It seemed too simple that the process of forgiveness and taking back accusations could have such an impact.

They did this very thoroughly, which is definitely good. I also did it. They forgave all the “anythings” against all the “anyones”. In so doing, they discovered that the simplest method is the most lasting, when we follow Jesus' instructions. There is no better or simpler way than following Jesus' instructions.

By forgiving someone it can even bring about their conversion.

Linda's Behavior

When Katharina married Leonhard – they were both widowers – she gained a 12-year-old stepdaughter: Linda. In Katharina's opinion there were some problems over the years. She saw Linda as a moody girl. Katharina prayed and tried to love her. For a while everything went well, until a new crisis arose.

Katharina forgave Linda before God

Exactly during this time, they learned about forgiveness. Katharina was very despondent about Linda. She spent a whole morning writing down and forgiving all her reservations and accusations against Linda back to the time she had joined the family. The list was three pages long.

During this time, Linda was visiting her grandmother. Neither Katharina nor Leonhard informed Linda about what they had prayed. A few weeks after these confessions, the turning point came in Linda's life. Linda returned home.

Linda is converted

She herself shared the following: “A certain moment has been engraved indelibly in my mind. I stood in the bathroom with one foot on the floor and one foot in the shower. At that moment it was as if I had been hit by lightning and I realized that “one foot inside, one foot outside” was a precise portrayal of my life. There had been different moments when I had been on the verge of surrendering my life to God. But somehow, I never did it. I lived in open opposition to Him. I felt that this was the moment of decision – for Him or against Him. I had to make a decision now. It could no longer be avoided. As I stood there, I carefully considered what it would cost me if I chose God's side. I knew that there were some things in my life which I would have to give up. But I was tired of trying to live in two worlds and not deciding for one or the other. I was at the end of my rope and reached for His peace. I took a deep breath and said out loud: “Lord, I choose You.”

Difficulties and Challenges

The following day brought hours of difficult conversation. There were honest confessions in the family circle. For Linda it was parting with years of hostility and guilt. For the parents it was recognizing their mistakes, false fears and lack of understanding. A short time later Linda was baptized.

Forgive, when you have anything against anyone.

Katharina and Leonhard had been worried, because their prayers hadn't been answered for a time. The astonishing thing was that before that, their prayers had been answered even though the "anythings" were there. This shows: Some of your prayers may be answered. Or maybe you think that they have been answered. "... *He sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*" (Matt. 5:45 NKJV) and "... *He is kind to the unthankful and evil.*" (Luke 6:35 NKJV) Some apparent answers weren't even answers to your prayers, but rather acts of a merciful God.

I hope that you and I have an unadulterated and living relationship with our Lord and continuous answers to our prayers. What can we discern about our willingness to forgive?

We can check our willingness to forgive to see if and to what extent we are connected with Jesus.

How can I with God's help immediately, completely and consistently forgive?

I am convinced that God is pleased about every person who forgives another person. Whoever wants to safely traverse this path and have lasting results, will do well to consider the following points.

1. **Am I a born-again Christian?** (John 3:1-21; 1 John 5:13) It is important to live in a genuine relationship with God so that He can answer my prayer.
2. **I have to make sure that there aren't any unconfessed sins in my life,** meaning all of my sins are forgiven. Amongst other things, we will probably have to confess to God that we were vexed about a certain brother and that we probably didn't immediately forgive him. We can pray using the promise in 1 John 1:9. If we confess, then He forgives us.
3. **Receiving forgiveness for my sins, doesn't necessarily mean that at the same time I am free of anger, resentment and bad feelings.** We can pray for deliverance with Jesus' promise: "*Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*" (John 8:36 NKJV) And the following wonderful promise of God tells us that we have already received what we asked for, if we have prayed according to God's will. "*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*" (1 John 5:14 NKJV) "*And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask [according to His will], we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.*" (1 John 5:15 NKJV)⁵

⁵ It is a great blessing when we learn how to claim promises while praying. You can read more about it in the booklet *Steps to Personal Revival*, chapter 4. It is available at: www.remnantpublications.com

4. I can make use of God's power of forgiveness. We will often not be able to forgive in our own strength. We should remember: "... *He will abundantly pardon.*" (Isaiah 55:7 NKJV) God commands us to forgive. "... *if you have anything against anyone, forgive him ...*" (Mark 11:25 NKJV) "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" (Matthew 6:12 NKJV) Claim by faith, through prayer with promises, God's power of forgiveness and then believe that you have already received what you have asked for (1 John 5:14-15). Since the Lord commanded us to forgive, it is possible with His help to do it immediately and completely. God doesn't command us to do something, which we can't do in His strength. Forgiveness remains forever, if I abide in Christ. If I don't abide in Christ, then the story can resurface again someday. As an old saying says: When grass grows over something, then someday a camel will come and eat all the grass. Whoever says: I can't forgive, should ask themselves if he/she even wants to forgive. My mother always said: "Whoever says: I can't, doesn't want to." But maybe you couldn't forgive, because you didn't know how you could forgive with God's help.

5. I can tell the Lord that I hereby forgive my brother for everything which he did or supposedly did to me or others. In doing so, it is good to specifically name things.

6. Pray for the person you have forgiven – that the Lord will bless and help him.

7. Ask God by claiming promises in prayer for God's love so that you can love the person concerned with your whole heart.

8. If you should still have any difficulties with forgiveness, then see a person you trust for pastoral counseling.

9. It may be that you have forgiven through a prayer of faith, but that your feelings haven't changed yet. What should you do? We don't need to repeat the whole process, but rather thank God that you were able to forgive with His help. Thereafter, keep thanking God until your feelings change.

Forgiveness is a matter of prayer. It is not a question of time. It is not a matter of years. It isn't a matter of letting the dust settle. It also doesn't mean trying to forgive. It doesn't say anywhere in the Bible that we should try to do something God has commanded, but rather we should do it – and in the case of forgiveness it clearly means forgiving right away.

(When someone isn't a believer yet, then it is good to add the following paragraph to the prayer. May I recommend praying aloud. You don't need to mention the texts in parentheses during prayer.)

"Great God, I don't know if You exist. But if You do, then answer my prayer so that I may know that You exist and that You care for me. Thank You so much."

"Father in heaven, I thank You that I can turn to You with my problem."

Prayer

Prayer

"Father in heaven, I thank You that I can turn to You with my problem. I confess that I am vexed (resentful, angry) at _____ because _____. I ask for Your forgiveness. I am glad that You forgive me for this sin. Your Word tells us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 NKJV) I sincerely thank You for already forgiving me (1 John 5:14-15).

Father, nevertheless, I have the problem that my inner burden still exists. I can't free myself from it. Your Word says: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36 NKJV) That's why I am asking You to free me from my vexation (resentment, anger) now. Since Your Word also says that You answer requests according to Your will and that we already have what we requested (1 John 5:14-15), I sincerely thank You that You have already freed me.

My human strength to forgive is insufficient, but I thank You that there is divine power of forgiveness. Now, I ask You in Your great kindness to give me Your power of forgiveness, because Your Word says: God pardons abundantly (according to Isaiah 55:7). Please give me all the forgiveness I need from Your treasure of forgiveness. Thank You for answering this request.

Thank You for preparing me to now forgive _____ (name) for their wrong _____ (matter). Lord Jesus, You said: When you pray, forgive when you have something against someone so that your Father in heaven will forgive your transgressions (according to Mark 11:25). Based on Your commission and Your empowerment I now forgive _____ (name) for their wrong _____ (matter). Thank You that I could do this with Your help.

I also ask You to give me love for _____ (name) and bless him/her. If we should have an opportunity to speak about this matter, then I ask You to safeguard me from any wrong words and if possible, empower me to help him/her so that he/she can also become free from their burden with Your help.

I praise and thank You for Your gracious help. Amen."

How can we determine if we have really forgiven someone?

By having a positive attitude towards the guilty person, nevertheless a negative attitude towards the incident. You will focus on the incident and not on the person, who did something to me.

Forgiveness can be seen as an instrument in God's hand to help the guilty person. Maybe God wanted to direct my attention towards the needs and problems of the guilty person.

Forgiveness acknowledges that bitterness claims a right, which we don't have. Bitterness is an unconscious means of taking revenge on the person who did something to us.

Forgiveness knows that the offender is already experiencing the consequences for their behavior.

Forgiveness is also manifested when we are ready with God's help to work for the benefit of the offender.

I think that we can also notice if forgiveness has taken place, when we can think in peace about the person who did us wrong or we think did us wrong. And also, when we don't feel pressured to tell about what the person did or allegedly did. When we recount things again and again, then I don't believe that real forgiveness has taken place.

Maybe the problem is that you wanted to forgive, but weren't able by yourself. We often need the Lord's help to forgive. Jesus said: "... *without Me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5 NKJV) and: "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" (Philippians 4:13 NKJV)

This is why it is good to ask our wonderful heavenly Father for strength to forgive, as already explained.

Forgetting!?

We often hear: I will forgive him, but I will never forget it. I think that this attitude can be overcome when we have prayed accordingly as explained above. I have experienced that after forgiving someone that I can still remember all the events, but that it no longer bothered me or strained my relationship with the person concerned. There were also cases where I prayed that our heavenly Father would erase my memories of certain events. He answered these prayers. We have a wonderful God.

I would like to close with another experience, where the people involved weren't followers of Jesus except Aunt Sybille. (The names have been changed.)

Loretta, Sybille and Tim's Experience

Aunt Sybille knew about Katharina and Leonhard's experience, as she with God's help forgave all her "anythings" against all the "anyones". That is why Sybille one day urged her sister, Loretta, to also take this path.

What were the circumstances? Loretta and her husband only had one child – a daughter. She was a pretty girl; I will call her Helga. In the parents' opinion, Helga went through a dangerous change in her character after her 17th birthday. She became uncommunicative, moody and secretive. She started to get poor

grades. She smoked marihuana-cigarettes and took drugs. All their admonitions fell on deaf ears. One day she disappeared. She was found in a large city. She had found a boyfriend and was living together with him.

Aunt Sybille invited the young people to her house for Christmas. And they actually came. She greeted them affectionately and served them a wonderful meal. Then the young people asked where they were supposed to sleep. Aunt Sybille asked: "Are you married?" They shook their heads. Aunt Sybille responded: "I will give you separate rooms." Helga yelled: "You are a hypocrite just like the others!" And immediately left with her boyfriend.

Sometime later, Helga's parents, Loretta and Tim, came to visit Aunt Sybille. She attempted to induce them to forgive Helga.

A few months later, Helga and her boyfriend moved near to Aunt Sybille. They even contacted her. Eventually they decided to get married. Living together had seemed so fashionable and had been fun. But they had few real friends. In addition, they felt an inner dissatisfaction, which they couldn't explain. But they realized that marriage had a much deeper meaning than they had thought.

Helga's parents refused to come to the wedding. [Parents can also treat their children unjustly and be unkind. I hope that when they were reconciled with the couple that they asked for forgiveness.] Loretta would have liked to have gone, but she didn't want to go without her husband. In desperation, Loretta decided to do what her sister, Sybille, had encouraged her to do months before.

At the same time as Helga was getting married far away from home, her mother retreated to her bedroom and did two things: She surrendered her life to Jesus and then spent two hours writing down all her accusations and blame against Helga since her 17th birthday. She realized how many things she had accumulated against her daughter. She forgave her daughter before God. Loretta was relieved and happier than she had been for many years.

Now, she urged her husband to also forgive his daughter. He especially found it hard to forgive Helga's boyfriend, who in his eyes had seduced his little girl.

Then the memorable day came when the young couple became reconciled with her parents in Sybille's living room. Helga asked her father to forgive her for her hard words back then. She hugged her mother and cried. Then to everyone's astonishment, she knelt down in front of her Aunt and said: "Aunt Sybille, you were right back then when you wanted to give us separate rooms. The reason I was so angry was that I knew that you were right. That is also the reason we moved here. We felt that you were the only person we could trust. You stood up for something and we really wanted to have what you had."

My Desire

Relationships between people are restored by forgiveness. May God give you, me and everyone these kind of miracles in our families and churches.

**Forgive, when you have
anything against anyone.**

With warm greetings,

Helmut



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