

It's Time to Forgive

"Time has come for us to forgive our fathers. Paul warns us that unforgiveness and bitterness can wreck our lives and the lives of others (Eph. 4:31; Heb. 12:15). I am sorry to think of all the years my wife endured the anger and bitterness that I redirected at her from my father. As someone has said, forgiveness is setting a prisoner free and then discovering the prisoner was you. I found some help in Bly's experience of forgiving his own father, when he said, "I began to think of him not as someone who had deprived me of love or attention or companionship, but as someone who himself had been deprived, by his father and his mother and by the culture." My father had his own wound that no one ever offered to heal. His father was an alcoholic, too, for a time, and there were some hard years for my dad as a young man just as there were for me."

"Now you must understand: Forgiveness is a choice. It is not a feeling, but an act of the will. As Neil Anderson has written, "Don't wait to forgive until you feel like forgiving; you will never get there. Feelings take time to heal after the choice to forgive is made." We allow God to bring the hurt up from our past, for "if your forgiveness doesn't visit the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete." We acknowledge that it hurt, that it mattered, and we choose to extend forgiveness to our father. This is *not* saying, "It didn't really matter"; it is *not* saying, "I probably deserved part of it anyway." Forgiveness says, "It was wrong, it mattered, and I release you."

"And then we ask God to father us, and to tell us our true name."

John Eldredge
"Fathered by God"

Pastor John Friedlund

Ephesians 4 & 5

...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace...

²⁶"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold...

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-3, 26-27, 5:21

_____ present an important cross-road in our relationships and the choices we make during a conflict will determine whether the relationship grows deeper or spirals into brokenness.

A Strategy for Conflict Resolution

- 1) **I need to move toward the other person as quickly as possible and not _____ them.**

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold... Ephesians 4:26-27

When we fail to deal with conflict we move toward isolation and relational strain. The message we send when we give others the *silent treatment* is—"To me, you are _____ today."

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace..." Ephesians 4:3

- 2) **I need to be willing to see behind toxic emotions to the relational _____ that have shaped the behavior of others.**

If I can see a person, not as one who has hurt me, but as one who carries a wound from the _____, I am in a better position to be an agent of God's Grace.

See to it that no one misses the Grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Hebrews 12:15

Before the Sun Goes Down

February 14, 2010

3) I need to listen well & initiate healing _____.

²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen...³²Be kind and compassionate to one another. *Ephesians 4:29-30,32a*

When, in a conflict, I respond without bitterness and anger and make a compassionate attempt at finding resolution through listening and talking through the issues with the other person, the probability of resolving the conflict and deepening the relationship is very high.

4) I need to be honest about...feelings and behaviors.

_____ every that everything is fine solves nothing and is a sure way to magnify the conflict at a later time. *"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor." Ephesians 4:25*

5) I need to enter into the hard work of _____, allowing the Spirit and Grace of God to bring healing _____ and _____ me.

³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³²Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ~ *Ephesians 4:31-32*

Forgiveness is setting a prisoner free and then discovering the prisoner was _____. We must forgive those who hurt us. The reason is simple: Bitterness and unforgiveness are claws that set their hooks deep in our hearts; they are chains that keep us held captive to the wounds and the messages of those wounds. Until you forgive, you remain their prisoner. Paul warns us that unforgiveness and bitterness can wreck our lives and the lives of others (Eph. 4:31; Heb. 12:15). We have to let them go.

Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds
on the heel that has crushed it.

Mark Twain

6) I need to acknowledge/own my part in a conflict.

✓ The seven A's of confession

- ✚ Address _____ involved
- ✚ Avoid excuses (if, but, and maybe)
 - Never ruin an apology with an excuse
- ✚ Admit specifically (both attitudes and actions)
- ✚ _____...effectively
- ✚ Ask forgiveness
- ✚ Accept the consequences
- ✚ _____ your behavior

Apologies and the seeking of forgiveness mean little when it becomes obvious that nothing has changed. And after awhile, people begin to realize that your apologies come from impure motives. They are simply a _____ to smooth over the conflict. The result is that people involved will no longer have any _____ for you as a person.

Learn to apologize effectively

Expressing regret: I feel badly about what I did. I'm sorry.

Accepting responsibility: I was wrong. It was my fault.

Making restitution: What can I do to make it right?

Repenting: I will work hard at not repeating that behavior.

Requesting forgiveness: Will you please forgive me?

*Taken from Dr. Gary Chapman
"The Art of Apology"*