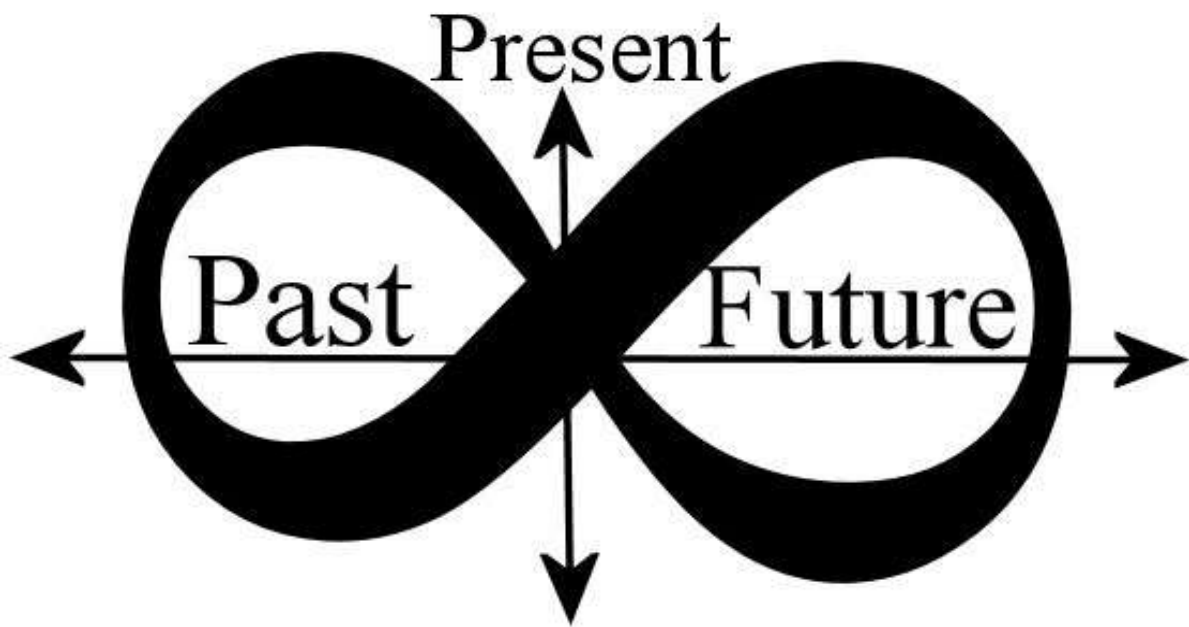


Dealing with the Past, the Present and the Future



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Dealing with the Past, the Present and the Future

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift,
that’s why it is called ‘the Present.’”

Alice Morse Earle

Philippians 3:10-16

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.” **NJKV**

Paul of Tarsus, Circa 61 AD

Introduction

In the book of Philippians Paul, the Apostle takes time to share some rare insight into how he dealt with things in his personal life. Here he shares his personal strategy for overcoming those times in your Christian life that you seem to get bogged down – or STUCK. It is easy to read past this short passage - we’ve all done it many times. But in this study, we will see how powerful his insight really is and why Paul was an indomitable worker for Christ. You will be challenged to discover areas in your life that are holding you back from being the very best you can be for Christ, while learning to help others in their journey to spiritual maturity.

God does not wear a wristwatch and He certainly does not operate on our time schedules. The Bible tells us: “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

How Does God, Who stands on the outside of time and space measure time?

By the Past, the Present and the Future

Since God is not bound by sequential time like we are He can be infuriating to those of us who are ruled by the clock. However, God does measure time. He measures it by the past, the present and the future.

It is in one or more of these three areas of time that we often get “stuck.” Learning to deal spiritually with the past, the present and the future makes all the difference in our spiritual growth and service to the Lord.

Why dealing with the Past, the Present, and the Future is foundational to your spiritual growth and maturity?

1. **Dealing with the Past:** Many people are chained to the past and cannot move forward. We must put the past behind us and stop wasting spiritual and emotional energy looking backward. Jesus said, “No man putting his hand to the plow and looking backward is fit (GR: well placed) of the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:62 **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE:** Those that live in the past cannot effectively move forward very far or very fast.
2. **Dealing with the Future:** Many Christians have no vision for their lives. They are either: a. unaware that God has a plan; b. have no clue what that plan entails or c. have determined their own plan and are pursuing it. Proverbs tells us: “Where there is no vision the people perish.” Alternate versions say, “Where there is no vision (alternate rendering: prophetic revelation) the people run unrestrained.” **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE:** The concept is that having no vision and nothing to aim towards causes people to live loose and sloppy lives. Wasting time, money and energy accomplishing nothing.
3. **Dealing with the Present:** Many people live in the past or the future. God revealed Himself as the great “I AM” to Moses. In revealing Himself as the “I AM” God was basically tell us to deal with Him in the PRESENT tense, This is why we are instructed in several places, “TODAY, if you hear His voice, so not harden your hearts...” And again Paul deals with the urgency of today telling us to “redeem the time,” in Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5. **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE:** Yesterday is gone, tomorrow may never come. You have today to hear God, obey Him and accomplish something.

“For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy....”

Understanding What is Driving Paul to Deal with His Past Present and Future

Philippians 3:1-12

1. Paul’s lack of confidence in his flesh
2. His desire for genuine righteousness (not self-righteousness)
3. His desire to KNOW Christ
4. His desire to experience the power of Christ
5. His understanding of suffering as it relates to Christian service and maturity
6. His Understanding that He had been “APPREHENDED” for a purpose by Christ
7. His desire to “apprehend” the purpose for which he had been “apprehended for.”

Section 1

Dealing with the Past

“Forgetting those things which are behind...”

Breaking Those Things Which Chain People to the Past

Two things happen when people are chained to the past.

1. They tend to get stuck in a cycle of advancement and retreat. They often wear out, quit for a while, then try again. Ultimately without breaking the chains they will settle for a mediocre Christian life or quit altogether.
 - a. Dog on a chain Illustration
 - b. Rubber band Illustration
2. When people are chained to the past, they spend more time looking backward than forward. They spend more emotional and thus spiritual energy in a backwards direction, thus minimizing forward momentum. Therefore, Jesus said, “No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.” While that seems harsh, the reality is that spending time constantly struggling with your past will cause you to be ineffective in the service of the king.

There are several things which chain people to the past:

1. Things that THEY have done.
 - a. Sins (Guilt robs us of the faith to serve because we feel unworthy.) **God’s answer to set us free:** Hebrews 9:14 – cleansing of our consciences by the blood of Jesus
 - b. Poor Choices (Abraham at the altar between Ai and Bethel Genesis 12 and 13) **God’s answer to set us free:** Taking us back to the point of detour and getting us back on track; Forgiving ourselves
 - c. Regrets (missed opportunities, those things we can’t go back and undo or fix - **God’s answer to set us free:** Redemption
2. Things that have been done TO them by others **God’s answer to set us free:** Forgiveness and redemption
 - a. Dysfunctional Families
 - b. Abuse (sexual, emotional, physical, neglect)
 - c. Betrayal (Example: God speaks to an elderly woman who was betrayed at age 14)
 - d. Miscellaneous Offenses (misc. does not mean minor – it means variety)
3. Disappointment with God - “seemingly unanswered” prayer; “If God is a loving God, why....?” **God’s answer to set us free:** Humility, coming to grips with God’s character, forgiving God, understanding, believing the scripture, “All things work together for good...” Romans 8
4. Places – sometimes because of experiences we get emotionally tied to places. The mere mention of a place causes us to get stressed. **God’s answer is to set us free:** Redemption, forgiveness

Redemption as a method of chain breaking:

Redemption is the process by which God recovers those things which have been lost or sold. Technically it means to “buy back” or to bring back to an original state.

Although a major part, redemption is not just about the forgiveness of our sins. God is a redeeming God. When He redeems a person, in effect, He “buys back” everything about that person. Here are some scriptures that explain redemption:

1. I Peter 1:18-19 – Redeemed by the PRECIOUS blood of Christ
2. Ephesians 1:11-14 – Redemption of the “purchased possession”
3. I Corinthians 6:19-20 – Bought (GR: redeemed) with a price – the idea is ownership –your life body, soul and spirit now belong to God by virtue of His purchasing you with Christ’s blood.

The good news is that when God “purchased” your life, He “purchased” ALL of it – the good, the bad and the ugly. He bought you “lock, stock and barrel,” as the saying goes. He now owns everything in your past, present and future. This means that your past is redeemed. It has been “bought up” by God. Not just your sins, but those things that have been done to you. Your mistakes and your bad choices now belong to God and He is capable of “redeeming” them. He can turn them into something positive and useful in His plan for your life.

Forgiveness as a method of chain breaking:

Forgiveness is a major Christian principle. In fact, the whole of Christianity stands or falls on this on this issue. If God does not forgive, we have no hope. Likewise, Jesus said if we don’t forgive God won’t continue to forgive us. But Forgiveness is not a simple issue. In this section we’ll look at a few “behind the scenes” issues involving forgiveness.

Most people are bound to the past with some sort of resentment, confusion or unforgiveness. In other words something happened some time ago that caused a person to get “STUCK” and they can’t really seem to go forward much past that point. Often the solution is forgiveness. Unforgiveness has been directly linked to emotional, spiritual and even physical problems in a person’s life.

For a more thorough discussion of the six areas of forgiveness we must all deal with on an ongoing basis please turn to Addendum 1 at the back of the syllabus.

Section 2

Dealing with the Future

“Reaching for those things which are ahead...”

Having resolved issues in our past and breaking the chains that limit us from moving forward successfully we are ready to consider the next issue in our quest for spiritual growth and fruitfulness: Our Future!

Reaching entails stretching for something that may be out of comfortable reach.

The Power of Vision

Proverbs 29:18 - in various translations - God has a Plan for Your Life

“Where there is no vision the people perish.” KJV

“Without a Vision is a people made naked” Young’s Literal Translation

“Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint.” ASV

“Where there is no word from God, people are uncontrolled” New Century Version

“When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild” NLT

“Without revelation people run wild” Holman Christian Standard Version

“Without a prophetic vision, the people throw off all restraint” Complete Jewish Bible

Principles:

1. Spiritual vision has little to do with our human generated goals; it is divine revelation of God’s will.
2. Vision provides the power to accomplish the things God has revealed to us.

Vision has the power to give us:

1. Purpose
2. Direction
3. Focus
4. Incentive
5. Self-control
6. A method of measurement concerning our goals

Thoughts on Vision:

“Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.” Habakkuk 3:1 **Principle:** Learn to record (write down) your vision, or at least the parts of it that you know. Keep a record of the things God speaks to you, or the desires of your heart. Adjust your vision as God adds or removes things.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1-2

God has a Plan for Your Life

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand (before ordained – KJV) so that we would walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10 NAS

1. What do you think of when you think of “workmanship?”
2. What do you think “prepared beforehand” means?
3. What is implied in the phrase “walk in them?”

Craftsmanship entails three things: purpose, design and functionality:

God has a plan for your life. He is working in your life to make you what you need to be to perform the function for which we were created. He is empowering you with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit to get the Job done.

Equipping the Saints: Ephesians 4:7-16

1. Oneness of source – variety in application – **Principle:** seek unity while embracing diversity
2. Everyone one of us – no one is left out of the 5 fold gifting – **Principle:** You were saved to DO something for Christ, not sit and watch
3. Jesus breaks His ministry into five parts and spreads them out through the Body (This is the true essence of Communion – Jesus broke the bread not the lamb at the Passover meal and called it His Body. Would it have not made more sense for Him to refer to the lamb as His body since He was “the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world?” – WHY? I Corinthians 10:15-16) – **Principle:** We need one another for the totality of Christ to be manifest in our churches and the world.
4. Their job is to equip the Saints to do the work: – **Principle:** No spectators in the Kingdom
5. UNTIL is a TIME sensitive word. – **Principle:** God anticipates the job will get done
6. Unity of Faith and Knowledge and the full expression of Christ on the earth. – **Principle:** God wants a church that will fully express the totality of Jesus to the world and for this reason we are called the Body of Christ – it is not a literary device it is a spiritual reality.
7. Every JOINT supplies: – **Principle:** Relationships allow the Spirit of God to move and work in and through His Body.

“His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.” Ephesians 4:13 Amplified Bible

Spiritual Gifts: I Corinthians 12:1-14

1. Differences of gifts, functions, applications, but the same God – **Principle:** Unity in Diversity. The rest of this chapter deals with this truth. To miss this is to miss the entire purpose of the Church.
2. At least ONE (if not more) of the spiritual gifts are given to every person. – **Principle:** You were saved to be used by God to minister to people in your appropriate place in the Body of Christ,
3. Anyone CAN experience ANY gift of the Spirit, but no one has all the gifts of the Spirit on a regular basis. – **Principle:** Individuals cannot express the totality of Christ alone; we need the gifts and anointing of others to get the job done.
4. 9 gifts of the spirit. These are supernatural abilities. – **Principle:** You need power to get the job done

5. 9 Gifts of the Spirit balanced with 9 fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). – **Principle:** Gifts are given; fruit is grown – do not confuse the two – God wants power & character in your life. Note: The hem of the high priest's robe was decorated with alternating bells and pomegranates symbolizing the balanced nature of 9 spiritual gifts (bells) and the 9 spiritual fruits (pomegranates)
6. The Gifts of the Spirit are determined BY the Spirit: – **Principle:** God decides what gifts we are to have in accordance with the job and the position in the Body we are to occupy.
7. The Body needs the various parts to fully function on the earth as Christ did. – **Principle:** You need to both find your place of service and give what you have, and you need to help others find their place and receive what they have.

Motivational Gifts: Romans 12:3-6

1. He did not say, "Don't think highly of yourself." He said, "Don't think MORE highly of yourself than you ought to." – **Principle:** Learn to have an accurate assessment of yourself. Genuine humility is neither arrogance nor false humility.
2. Once again, we see various functions within the unity of the Body: Differences of gifts, functions, applications, but the same God – **Principle:** Do not fall into the trap of doing what you are not called to do. Vision will help you stay within your gifting.
3. We are "members one of another" – **Principle:** We are not Lone Rangers with a "me and Jesus" mentality. We must remain vitally connected to the Body of Christ.
4. Seven motivational gifts listed – **Principle:** Mary and Martha syndromes; respect one another's gifts, motivations and callings, they will not be the same as yours.

Determining and Operating in your Spiritual Gifts and Callings:

1. I do not like spiritual gift assessment tests. These are not natural gifts they are spiritual gifts. Once activated they will operate when you get into spiritual situations. – **Principle:** The best way to find your gift is get around people who are moving in the Spirit and allow God to start using you.
2. Like all things Spiritual, the gifts of the Spirit require some understanding and faith – **Principle:** Believe God wants to use you in relation to the predetermined purpose in your life, and that He will equip you to get a supernatural job done.
3. A gift is given and a fruit is grown. Spiritual gifts are not earned by your maturity or spirituality. They are given and can be used as such. – **Principle:** 1. You didn't earn your gift so get over yourself; 2. Acknowledge that others who you do not deem as very spiritual can still be used by God, so be careful not to reject something God has for you because you don't like the vessel.
4. Having a gift or calling does not mean you know how to use it or don't need to grow in it – **Principle:** Be humble when God starts using you and yield to the spiritual leadership God has placed over you, so you will not be destroyed, but that your gifts and callings can be matured and bear much fruit.
5. God sets the members (and thus their respective giftings and callings) in the Body as it pleases HIM (I Corinthians 12:18) – **Principle:** If God has a plan for you, and He is hand tooling your life and He is empowering you to get the job done, then it follows: He must also have prepared a PLACE for you to function in your gifts and callings.
6. Believe God to bring you into his will and plan for your life.
7. Yield to God so He CAN bring his will and plan for your life into manifestation.
8. Daily strive toward you calling and purpose
9. Do not take a passive approach to spiritual gifts. Stir up your spiritual gifts and keep them activated: II Timothy 1:6-7; I Timothy 4:14

Section 3

Dealing with the Present

“Pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ...”

Once we have made peace with our past and have a decent understanding of where we are headed in the future we need to develop a plan for daily living that reinforces BOTH of the previous studies.

There are no LOW callings in God and Rewards are Disproportionate to Service

1. Matthew 20:1-16 – **Principle:** Many are called but few are chosen.
2. Matthew 10:42 – **Principle:** Rewards are not proportional to actions
3. Like 19:11-26 – **Principle:** Faith in little – faith in much. The little things are proving grounds.

Pressing Requires Effort and Implies Resistance

1. Philippians 2:12: Too many people think Christianity is automatic. The prevailing thought is, “Now that I am a Christian, or have a calling, or a gifting, or a prophecy, God should just make everything work.” – **Principle:** Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
2. I Corinthians 9:24 & Hebrews 12:1 The Christian life referred to as a RACE – **Principle:** You must run with all your heart to win
3. II Timothy 2:3: Christians referred to as soldiers – **Principle:** Endure discomfort for the sake of your calling
4. You have three great enemies
 - a. The world: I John 2:15-17; I Corinthians 2:12; II Timothy 4:10; James 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 2:8; – **Principle:** Loving the world and it’s philosophies and systems will hinder your Christian life
 - b. The Flesh: Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:17-21 (works of the flesh); Galatians 6:8 – **Principle:** Pampering your flesh will nullify your spiritual growth
 - c. The Devil: I Peter 5:8-9 – **Principle:** We must remain on guard and actively engage in spiritual warfare on a regular basis
5. Ephesians 6:10-18: Put on the Armor of God – **Principle:** We are in an active warfare that regularly produces spiritual casualties – you do not have to be one!

Walk According to What You Already Know - Philippians 3:16

It is a reality that we will always know more than we apply - spiritually speaking. However God expects us to grow and mature in such a way as to apply, and keep applying, the truths and principles we have already learned. Christianity is not so much doctrinal as it is practical. In fact the more doctrinal oriented it becomes, the less practical it becomes.

The Gospel is to be LIVED, not just BELIEVED

Addendum 1

Forgiveness

Introduction

Forgiveness is a foundational issue in Christianity (Hebrews 10:16-18). Remove forgiveness from the equation and the rest of Christianity is unsustainable. Forgiveness forms the basis of our relationship with God and creates the framework for God to be able to work in our lives. Forgiveness between people, especially those who call themselves Christians is also a fundamental Christian principle in our Christian faith and is vitally important to our mental and even physical beings. Early in His earthly ministry Jesus taught the people this important aspect.

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” JKV Mat 6:10-15

Defining Forgiveness

1. What two words did Jesus use to describe sin or offenses?
2. What do the words “debt” and “debtor” make you think of?
3. What does the word “trespass” make you think of?
4. How do these words relate to your offenses against God?
5. How do they relate to offenses from or to others?

Six areas of forgiveness we all must deal with regularly

1. Asking and Receiving forgiveness FROM God for our sins
2. Forgiving OURSELVES for our sins
3. Forgiving GOD for those things we are mad at Him About
4. ASKING forgiveness FROM others when we offend someone
5. Forgiving others
6. Helping others learn to forgive

Some Basic Concepts of Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is much more complicated than simply saying – “You just need to forgive.”
2. Forgiveness is a spiritual quality, not simply an emotional one
 - a. Any quality originating in God is Spiritual because God is a Spirit
 - b. Because it is spiritual it must be dealt with as a spiritual issue – those who are not spiritual or do not understand the nature of grace have nothing else to work with except emotional effort
3. Forgiveness is always a legal, not an emotional, issue
 - a. Jesus is our _____ I John 2:1
 - b. Justice, justification, redemption, advocate, etc are all judicial words
 - c. We shall all appear before the _____ of Christ. II Cor. 5:10
 - d. God does not wink at sin, but He does forgive sin THROUGH the legal sacrifice of Christ - Romans 6:23, II Cor. 5:21
 - e. If you do what God says you are forgiven regardless of what you might feel temporarily – it is a faith issue, not an emotional issue
4. Forgiveness is NEVER earned it is ALWAYS given – otherwise it is penitence – making up for your sins – canceling them by doing something to make up for them – Catholic concept of penitence and purgatory
 - a. In relation to God
 - b. In relation to others
5. Almost every emotional issue of unforgiveness relates to one of two issues:
 - a. Debt – “You owe me, and I want you to pay up.”
 - i. This directly relates to the Biblical truth of Redemption and bond slavery
 - b. Punishment – “You hurt me, and I want you to hurt in return.”
6. Jesus answered the two issues of unforgiveness:
 - a. by PAYING our DEBT: Redemption
 - i. I Cor .6:20
 - b. by SUFFERING our PUNISHMENT
 - i. Isa. 53:4-6
7. Unforgiveness is a sin: Many people are bound to unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness because they do not see their unforgiveness as a sin

8. Forgiveness deals with both actions and attitudes
 - a. Attitude of Forgiveness
 - i. Matthew 18:21 “How often shall I forgive?”
 - ii. Forgiveness MUST be a foundational mindset of the Christian; it is more important than worship - Matt. 5:23-24; Matt. 9:13
 - iii. Gaining your brother Matt. 18:15-18
 - iv. The great debate: “Do they have to ask for forgiveness?”
 - b. Actions of Forgiveness:
 - i. The Act of Forgiveness
 1. While there may be a long period time and chain of events leading up to it – forgiveness happens in an instant
 2. Forgiveness is a decision based on faith, not emotion
 - ii. Path of Forgiveness
 1. Walking out our decision
 2. Emotional re-occurrences do not mean that we haven’t forgiven
 - a. Memories – dealing with the boogeyman in the shadows
 - b. Do not rehearse it – reverse it
 - c. Take your emotion back to your decision
9. How God deals with sin – A transaction takes place II Cor. 5:21
 - a. Make the “transaction of forgiveness”
 - i. Learn to ask for forgiveness. “I’m sorry.” Is not the same as “Please forgive me.” One is emotional, the other is spiritual
 - ii. “I’m sorry!” “Oh, that’s okay.” Does not cut it. There has been no transaction – no forgiveness asked or granted.
 - iii. Do not take it lightly when others ask for your forgiveness – grant it that both the sin and offense might be released.

Getting Forgiveness from God

Forgiving God

At first this may seem like a strange concept. Our Christian sensibilities will produce thoughts like this, “God doesn’t need forgiveness; He has never done anything wrong.” BINGO! He never has done anything wrong. This is an important key to this area of forgiveness.

1. Forgiveness is not always about the other party it is about us being free from past experiences so we can spend our energy moving forward not always wasting it on the past.
2. You can be made at some who has not done anything wrong – you just don’t like what they did. (Matt.5:22 - Angry without cause)
3. Luke 7:18-23 John and the the prison principle
4. Offense towards God will kill your faith and make it unable to trust Him.
5. Deal with it: “Dear God, I can’t say I have always liked what you have done or not done in my life. There have been times I felt you let me down, or didn’t come through, but I know in my heart that you are prefect and love me perfectly and always have my best in mind. I choose to believe that all things work together for good concerning me, even those things I don’t yet understand, because you are my God. I choose to release any

hard feelings I have towards you and trust you from now on to deal with me according to your perfect will and knowledge concerning my life and future.”

Forgiving Yourself

A major problem hindering many Christians today is the issue of not forgiving themselves. One basic reason is it is rarely discussed in the Church; however, much freedom and liberty can result in properly dealing with this issue.

1. Does not seem too spiritual does it? Self-serving? Arrogant?
2. “Oh, I know God forgives me, but I just can’t forgive myself.” So, you’re more righteous than God; with higher standards? It sounds very spiritual, but it is not:
3. This issue directly relates to our Conscience – Heb. 9:12-14.
4. The two issues of unforgiveness, debt and punishment, apply to our own issues, as well as to others. The very real, but often unconscious thoughts sound something like this:
 - a. Debt: “I fouled up my life and I don’t deserve blessings because I owe a debt, therefore I will sabotage my life until I feel the debt is paid and I deserve a good life again.”
 - b. Punishment: “If God isn’t going to punish me, I will have to punish myself.”
 - c. We need to reckon the debt to ourselves and the punishment deserved satisfied at the cross.
5. DO IT!
 - a. Look yourself in the mirror and call yourself by name and make the transaction of forgiveness
 - b. “(Insert your name) I forgive you for every stupid thing you’ve done that has hurt my life and made things more difficult for me. I forgive you for the shame you have caused. Because of Jesus’ death I count your debt paid and your punishment fulfilled. I release you to go in peace and be blessed to serve God unhindered from now on.”
 - c. When ministering this to other people be sure to give them time to deal with stuff. You will find that this is not as simple as it seems and will bring up a lot of buried issues that need to be dealt with. Don’t rush them.

Asking Forgiveness from Others

At times we all fail in our relations with other people. The apostle John reminds us, “if we say we have no sin we are lying.” It isn’t the person who never fails that is mature; it is the person who can humbly deal with their failures in a spiritual manner that is mature. Asking forgiveness when necessary is a true sign of spiritual maturity.

1. Pride keeps us from admitting we were wrong.
2. God ALWAYS places the responsibility on us to initiate the transaction of forgiveness.
 - a. Matt. 5:21-24 If your brother has something against you, go to your brother
 - b. Matt. 18:15-17 If you have something against your brother go to your brother
 - c. The motive was ALWAYS reconciliation, not confrontation

3. Make the transaction of forgiveness
 - a. Saying “I am sorry” is not the same thing as saying “please forgive me.”
 - b. Asking for forgiveness is humbling and spiritual
 - c. Asking for forgiveness requires the other person to deal with their end, and not just sweep it under the rug.
4. Our failures can still bring honor to God when we deal with them spiritually I Peter 1:12 – Humility and forgiveness are not significant traits of this world and therefore stand out and give testimony to the reality of God in your life.
5. Repent! Repent means to “turn and go the opposite direction.” Sometimes we have to admit that we regularly offend people with our actions, manners or words. You may be tempted to say, “Well that’s just the way I am, people will have to get used to me.” The reality is, Jesus died to change, “just the way you are.” We often hear a lot about not being offended, but I would like to hear more messages about not being offensive.
6. Restitution: On occasion, we must be willing to offer and fulfill restitution or to otherwise accept consequences for our sins and offenses.
7. Be Humble and allow people to prove your sincerity – don’t get angry because they don’t just accept your repentance and apology.

Forgiving Others

Forgiveness is not a simple issue. You cannot just say to people, “You just need to forgive.” There are many issues, emotional and spiritual, bound up in the issues of unforgiveness. We have left this most important issue until last because in many ways it is more difficult to forgive others if you have not first worked through the first four issues. If you do not know forgiveness from God, it will be nearly impossible to have the motivation to forgive others in a genuine spiritual (as opposed to strictly emotional) sense. If you are mad at God, you won’t be able to have the faith or receive the spiritual power to forgive. If you harbor guilt and unforgiveness towards yourself, your desire to forgive others will be greatly diminished. And, if you have trouble humbling yourself and asking forgiveness from another person, it will be difficult for you to grant forgiveness to others.

The other issue that many people struggle with is what forgiveness actually looks like in real life. Questions like, “How do I treat the person after I have forgiven them?” Or thoughts such as “If I forgive them, they’ll get away with it,” are real issues for people. In this section we’ll deal with some of these emotional and practical issues that hinder forgiveness.

1. The necessity of forgiveness in the life of a Christian
 - a. Matt. 6:10-15 (the issue of “as”)
 - b. Matt. 18:15-35 Scriptures we never read together
 - i. Dealing with offense scripturally
 - ii. The 491st principle
 - iii. Binding and loosing
 - iv. Jesus’ teaching on the results of unforgiveness
2. Some considerations
 - a. Is repentance necessary/to be required before you forgive a person?

- b. Is there a difference in the way we treat a fellow Christian and a lost person?
 - c. When it comes to God forgiving us and us forgiving others is there a fundamental difference. If so, what?
3. Emotional thinking that hinders forgiveness
- a. "Forgive them? They don't deserve forgiveness."
 - i. No one, including you, deserves forgiveness
 - ii. Forgiveness is not about them as much as it is about you.
 - b. "If I forgive them they will get away with it." (punishment)
 - i. Most likely your unforgiveness will not punish the person in the long term. They may perhaps feel the sting of broken fellowship if there was a close relationship in the first place, however if they were not they couldn't care less. Those that do care will eventually just get over it.
 - ii. Unforgiveness punishes us more than it does those we are trying to punish.
 - iii. There is nothing you can do to the person that will be worse than what God will do to the person if they don't repent. Rom. 12:18-21
 - c. "If I forgive them, I'll have to treat them right." (debt)
 - i. How do we treat those that have sinned against us?
 - ii. Does forgiveness mean there are no consequences?
 - iii. Is there a difference between how we treat those inside and outside the church?
 - iv. The issue of boundaries
 - d. "If I forgive them, it means I accept what they did and send a message it was okay." (debt)
 - i. God never condones sin, but He does forgive it – forgiveness is not approval
 - ii. "Go and sin no more."
 - e. "If I forgive them it means I have to let them do it again."
 - i. The reality and necessity of boundaries
 - ii. The 9 laws of boundaries

Addendum 2

The Nine Laws of Boundaries

Acknowledgements: From a Study by Christoph Kreitz, based on the books Boundaries and Boundaries in Marriage by Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend

The Law of . . .

Exposure: Boundaries must be communicated. *Otherwise, they are invisible to others*

Proactivity: Boundaries must express what you stand *for*, not just what you are *against*. *Solve problems based on your values, wants, and needs.*

Sowing and Reaping: Our actions have *consequences*. Someone *will* bear them. *Do not interrupt this law by regularly bailing others out.*

Responsibility: We are responsible *to*, not *for* each other. *We are to love one another, not be one another.*

Power: We do not have power over *other people*. *We hardly have enough power over ourselves*

Respect: If we wish our boundaries to be respected, we must respect those of others *For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*

Motivation: We must be free to say no before we can wholeheartedly say yes. *“Acts of love” are worthless if we don’t feel to have a choice*

Evaluation: We need to evaluate the effects our boundaries because others *hurt and harm are not the same – pain may eventually lead to growth*

Activity: *We need to take the initiative to solve our problem. Do not wait for others to take the first step*