

Forgive Your Family

Family life should be one of our greatest sources of joy and happiness. In a family it's normal to have been wronged, offended and sinned against at some point. It is nearly unavoidable. No family is perfect and sometimes the people we love the most have the ability to hurt us the most.

Have you ever caught yourself speaking more kindly to a stranger than you would your own family? Sometimes we are so argumentative and combative with our family. Our words and actions have caused real damage to our relationships.

Forgiveness alone has the capacity to bring peace and reconciliation between humans and with God. If Christianity is about anything, it is about forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21-35

Forgive like Jesus

- Ministry of Jesus was characterized by extreme acts of forgiveness, such as the woman caught in adultery (John 8).
- From the cross Jesus shouted, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."
 - Jesus forgave, giving us the opportunity to repent and receive restoration.
 - God's forgiveness of sins through Christ's death, burial and resurrection is the basis for all forgiveness, even between people.
- Acts 7 records the stoning of Stephen to death. As he is dying, Stephen prayed aloud, "Do not change them with this sin."
 - The coats of the stoners were laid at the feet of a young man named Saul.
 - The proclamation of forgiveness by Stephen leads to Saul's conversion.

Four Ways that people damage the forgiveness process:

- When we apologize, we continue to argue and justify our initial behavior
- We withhold forgiveness and wait for an apology. Like Jesus and Stephen, we can forgive even if the offender never apologizes.
- We unnecessarily and unwisely involve others in our conflict.
- After forgiving (an act of our will, not our emotions) we take every opportunity to bring up the past.

Healing comes through forgiveness

- The biblical mandate to forgive is for our benefit, not our detriment.
- We cannot allow the violation to conform us into the image of the violator.
- We should use our experience of suffering and violation to improve ourselves and make a better world.
- We can suffer and also benefit, in the way that gold is purified. **1 Peter 1:3-9**
- Christ suffers with victims, comforts them and gives them a new identity. We do the same.
- To claim the comfort of the Crucified while rejecting his way does harm to our relationship with Christ, ultimately hurting our own selves.
- The healing and restoration comes by leaning his grace to forgive as he has forgiven us.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.