



STUDY GUIDE

Why Is It So Hard to Forgive?

I. Overview

- A. What forgiveness is not.
- B. What forgiveness is.
- C. Symptoms of unforgiveness.
- D. Who, what, when of forgiveness.
- E. Consequences of not forgiving.
- F. Steps to true forgiveness.

II. What Forgiveness is *Not*

- A. Forgetting.
- B. Justifying that there really wasn't a problem.
- C. Excusing or denying the hurt.
- D. Tolerating or overlooking.
- E. Condoning wrongdoing.
- F. Allowing others to take advantage of me.

III. What Forgiveness *Is*

- A. Allowing Jesus to pay for the wrongdoing of the offender.
 - 1. It is releasing another person from accountability for their wrongdoing, sin, mistake, failure, or ways he/she has disappointed or betrayed you.

2. Forgiveness begins with a choice I make.
- B. Although forgiveness begins with a choice, it is often a process, not just an event. Forgiveness is a work of God's grace in my heart towards another.
 - C. Two components of the offense must be forgiven.
 1. **Injustice:** "I was sinned against, and it is unjust and wrong."
 2. **Consequences:** His/her sin has now damaged my life and there may be irreparable consequences.
 3. We must forgive both the injustice and the consequence.
 - D. Allow Jesus' blood to be enough to pay for both the injustice and the consequence of any sin or offense committed against you. No one has power to "ruin your life" or change your future destiny unless you empower them to do so through unforgiveness.
 - E. Repentance and acknowledgement of wrongdoing is not required to release forgiveness:
 1. Jesus forgave those who were killing Him, even while they were still doing it and not at all repentant. (Luke 23:34)
 2. Stephen also forgave those who were killing him while they were yet in the act and totally unrepentant. (Acts 7:60)
 - F. Unforgiveness is sometimes wrongly justified by the intensity of the pain.

IV. Symptoms of Unforgiveness

- A. A hardened heart
- B. Frequent anger
- C. Thoughts of revenge
- D. Sarcasm
- E. Avoiding conversation or intimacy

V. The Who, What, When of Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21–35)

- A. **Who must you forgive?** Everyone, especially those who continue to hurt you. (Romans 12:14–21)
- B. **What must you forgive?** Everything—big or small, mistake or sin.
- C. **When must you forgive?**
 - 1. Now.
 - 2. Each time they sin (70 times 7).
 - 3. Not dependent upon the other person’s acknowledgement of wrongdoing.
- D. **Unforgiveness is a symptom of idolatry.** Remove the person who sinned against you from the throne of your heart and let Jesus Christ alone have that position.

VI. Consequences of Not Forgiving

- A. You can’t receive God’s love or love God. (1 John 4:20)
- B. You grieve the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 4:30)
- C. You harm yourself, not the offender.
- D. You bind yourself to the offender.
- E. You give Satan legal basis to torment you. (Matthew 18:34)
- F. You become blinded so that you cannot see your true enemy.
- G. You expose yourself to increased physical sickness, as your body attempts to deal with the stress of bitterness and unforgiveness.
- H. Time will not heal this. A choice to forgive must be made.

VII. Steps to Forgiveness

- A. Make a decision to forgive.
- B. Recognize that forgiveness is not dependent upon the repentance or even acknowledgement of the wrongdoing by the one you are to forgive. (Luke 23:34)
- C. Repent of your own wrong attitudes toward the one you are to forgive (i.e., bitterness, pride, anger, hatred, resentment, disappointment).

- D. Repent of the idolatry of allowing another person to determine your identity or destiny.
- E. Receive God's forgiveness. (Psalm 86:5)
- F. Give up your right to be treated fairly.
- G. Forgive yourself as God has forgiven you.
- H. Verbally declare forgiveness towards the other person in prayer.
- I. Release that person from all accountability for wrongdoing, injustice you suffered, and the negative consequences in your life as a result of his/her actions.
- J. Bless that person in prayer and in action. (Matthew 5:44)
- K. Rebuild relationship with the offender.