



# World Christian Fellowship

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## Forgive & Forget

**Genesis 41:50-52**, *And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. <sup>51</sup>Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." <sup>52</sup>And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

### **Introduction:**

Forgiveness' can be an emotionally charged word.

We have all been hurt by someone, but sometimes it brings years of pain and bitterness.

Thankfully, God knew that amidst pain and suffering, there is hope in forgiveness.

Undoubtedly, walking through forgiveness can be quite difficult and overwhelming.

Sometimes we are bound by an emotional pain that resurfaces again and again.

As Christians we have a God who brings such simple truth, commands, and grace.

Although simple, the Bible can at times be difficult and overwhelming for us to trust and obey.

Thankfully the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, provides godly guidance, strength, and love to help us overcome our human nature.

### **The Forgiving God:**

When we look at forgiveness according to the Bible, we must start with God. God knows all about forgiveness.

His acts of grace and mercy toward undeserving people are numerous!

**Luke 17:1**, *Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!"*

Just look at the Israelite people in the desert complaining and turning to other idols.

**How many times did God forgive them when they repented?**

**Exodus 34:5-7**, *Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, <sup>7</sup>keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."*

**Nehemiah 9:17**, *They refused to obey, And they were not mindful of Your wonders That You did among them. But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion They appointed a leader To return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.*

**Psalm 86:5**, *For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.*

### **What about God's character?**

Why is it important that our God is a God who forgives?

Because God is love.

**1 John 4:8**, *He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

The ultimate example of God's forgiveness is the restored relationship God offers us with himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As a sinful people, we are separated from God and our relationship is broken (**Romans 3:23, 5:12, 6:23**).

It is completely our fault, and God had absolutely no reason to offer forgiveness. But out of His compassion and love for us He did!

God sent His only son, Jesus, to come to the world and pay the price for our sin.

**John 1:29-30**, *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'*

Jesus took our sin, died in our place, and gave us a fresh start with God.

**Matthew 26:28**, *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

**Ephesians 1:7**, *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19**, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. <sup>18</sup>Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

### **When did God send His Son to die for us?**

**Romans 5:6**, *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

**Romans 5:8**, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

**Romans 5:10**, *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

**What does God offer to us through Jesus?**

**What have we done to deserve it?**

### **1. Is forgiveness a conscious choice.**

Forgiveness is a choice that we make through our free will. We do not have to wait for us to be “ready” or for our feelings to lead us. We must decide to forgive, and the emotions will follow in time.

**Colossians 3:13**, *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

**Matthew 6:14-15**, *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

We are to forgive not when we are ready (or when the person has apologized), but rather we are instructed to forgive because God has already freely forgiven us through Jesus Christ.

## **2. How do we forgive when we don't feel like it?**

We forgive by faith out of an obedience to God's commands. Since forgiveness goes against our human, self-centred nature, we must forgive out of faith in God. We must trust that God will change our hearts in time, while we forgive in obedience.

**Philippians 1:6**, *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*

Time will not heal the wounds but only forgiveness will.

### **3. Does forgiveness happen overnight?**

Forgiveness is a process, and there will be multiple layers of healing.

The decision to forgive can happen in an instance (because it's not dependent on emotion), but you must continue to walk out that forgiveness for a lifetime.

We are called to repeatedly forgive without limits!

**Matthew 18:21-22**, *Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"* <sup>22</sup>*Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

**Romans 12:14**, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

### **4. How do you know when the process of forgiveness is complete?**

Forgiveness is about setting someone free, and that person is you!

The forgiveness process is complete when you experience the freedom from anger, bitterness, revenge, or hurt.

You are freed from the power of this other person over you!

## **5. Is there a time to approach the person who offended me?**

Yes, Scripture teaches us that we are to go to those who have sinned against us.

**Matthew 18:15-20**, *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ <sup>17</sup>And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or*

*three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

However, we are not to judge one another as if we are sinless, but rather we should go in love.

**Matthew 7:1-5,**

*Galatians 6:1-2, Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

We are also instructed to approach someone quickly if we realize we are the offender.

**Matthew 5:23-24,** *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Healthy communication is good for our relationships. God wants to use us to help one another become more holy and righteous. Many times, we need to help each other realize where we fall short.

## 6. How do you know when to approach & forgive them?

There should be lots of prayer and discernment!

This is a grey area, but the Holy Spirit knows your situation and what's best for you and the other party.

The most important guiding factor should be love for the other person.

**1 John 4:19-21**, *We love Him because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

"On Thursday morning, **November 21, 2002**, as the sun was peeking over the horizon in the port city of **Sidon in southern Lebanon**, **Dr. Bonnie Penner Witherall** was up early. On this day she was going to work at the prenatal clinic that offered medical services to the Muslim women from a nearby refugee camp.

Tensions were running high because of events elsewhere in the Middle East, and Americans in general and missionaries in particular had been warned of potential danger.

**Dr. Bonnie and her husband Gary**, both graduates of **Moody Bible Institute**, had come to **Lebanon** with a burden to share Christ in the Muslim world. For several years they had been studying Arabic so they could communicate with the people they hoped to reach with the gospel.

At approximately 8:00 a.m. Bonnie answered a knock at the clinic door. Authorities can only surmise what happened next. Evidently a man hit her in the face and chest, and then shot her three times in the head, killing her instantly.

When Gary heard the news, he ran to the clinic. By this time the police had come, and the gunman was nowhere to be found. He tried to fight his way into the room where his wife lay in a pool of blood, but the police wouldn't let him enter. In one of the cruel ironies of our modern world, someone took a picture of Bonnie after she died, and that gruesome picture has been seen across the Internet.

The next day the London Times carried a report on the murder of **Bonnie Penner Witherall**. It quoted **Gary Witherall** as saying that he had forgiven his wife's killers: *"God led us to Lebanon and we knew that we might die. ... It's a costly forgiveness. ... It cost my wife."*

On the long flight home while accompanying his wife's body to America, he came to a simple conclusion: "God said there's a seed that's been planted in your heart. You either hate and be angry or you forgive. I said I have to forgive."

On Sunday, **November 24**, **Gary Witherall** spoke at a memorial service for his wife held at the church building said "*Whoever did this crime, I forgive them. It's not easy. It took everything that I have but I can forgive these people because God has forgiven me.*"

## **Forgetting:**

A good memory is a blessing; but there are some things we ought to forget.

## **Joseph's Experiences**

### **Do Joseph must forgive his brothers?**

As just a young man he was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers (**Genesis 37**).

Bought by Potiphar an officer of the Pharaoh he rose to position of prominence only to be betrayed and imprisoned for something he did not do (**Genesis 39**).

He interprets the dreams of his fellow prisoners, the king's cupbearer, and the king's baker but he is forgotten (**Genesis 40**).

Finally, because of his God given ability to interpret the dreams he is remembered to the Pharaoh and is ultimately elevated to the prime minister of Egypt (**Genesis 41:37-41**).

**What will Joseph do with the pain of betrayal and rejection will Joseph be able to forgive?**

Now consider with me the problems of choosing not to forgive.

We get hurt.

We become confused. (Why is this happening?)

We become defeated.

We become discouraged.

We discover the truth.

We must decide.

One can of course list many reasons why people chose not to forgive.

**Joseph's Decision 41:51-52**

As the years have passed for Joseph, he had been willing to forgive the injustices done to him. He had evidently forgiven his brothers. He had no doubt struggled through forgiveness of Potiphar and Potiphar's wife.

He had also been forced to deal with forgiveness for the servant of Pharaoh' who had forgotten him, after he, himself had been released from prison.

But not only had Joseph forgiven, I believe that he had forgotten.

**Genesis 41:51-52,** *Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."<sup>52</sup> And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."*

Joseph has two sons, the first he named Manasseh which means "forgetting."

Joseph through the naming of his son is declaring that God has made him to forget all his trouble.

**What is the characteristic of God?**

**What does God when we ask for forgiveness?**

**Psalms 103:8-12**, *The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. <sup>9</sup>He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. <sup>10</sup>He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup>For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; <sup>12</sup>As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

There is no measurable distance!

**Psalms 32:1-2**, *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup>Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

**Hebrews 8:12**, *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

What a blessing.

Hezekiah the king had repented of his sin against God and had been forgiven by Him.

**Isaiah 38:17-20**, *Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from*

*the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. <sup>18</sup>For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth. <sup>19</sup>The living, the living man, he shall praise You, As I do this day; The father shall make known Your truth to the children. <sup>20</sup>“The Lord was ready to save me; Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments All the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.”*

When people turn to the Lord, He does deliver their lives from the pit of destruction.

In addition, He does something about their sins. He deliberately casts their sins behind His back.

In this way God is conveying the truth that those sins are no longer before Him.

- ✓ He no longer looks at them.
- ✓ He no longer sees the penitent as being guilty of them.
- ✓ He will not bring those sins back against them again.

**But what is he forgetting?**

**Did he forget the events themselves?**

**Did he forget the pit?**

**Did he forget the prison?**

## Did he forget the false accusations?

The answer of course is no!

Instead, Joseph chose to forget the pain associated with those events.

Rather than allow it to spoil his present and his future, he chose to put the past aside. He had determined that he would not allow himself to be held captive by an unforgiving heart.

His second son was named **Ephraim**, which means “*doubly fruitful*.” Joseph had put the past behind him. He understood that the past was just that, past.

There was nothing he could do to change the past but he could keep it from ruining the present and the future.

It is significant that Joseph named his first son Manasseh (forgetting) and his second son Ephraim (doubly fruitful), rather than the other way around.

For no one can really be fruitful until the past is forgotten in the proper sense.

If we are living in the past, whether that is the past of unconfessed sin, hurts, or suffering we will never be completely fruitful in the present.

We must let the past be the past, forgetting it and going on for the Lord.

Even the great apostle Paul admonished us to forget those things which are behind past failures, past burdens, past heartaches, and defeats.

**Philippians 3:13**, *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,*

How tragic it is when we harbour these hurts down within and let them poison us.

Joseph knew that the only way to enjoy the present and be able to face the future is by forgetting the past. I wonder if you and I have learned that lesson.

## **Conclusion**

You may need to experience forgiveness in one of three areas today.

### **1. Forgiveness from God.**

The first area of need for forgiveness in your life may be that you need God's grace and forgiveness?

God is waiting to offer you grace and forgiveness.

## **2. Forgive someone else.**

The second area that you may need forgiveness in your life may be that you are at a place where you need to forgive someone else. Maybe someone has treated you as badly as Joseph's brothers treated him. They have wounded you, and you still feel the pain.

Give up on the desire for revenge.

Instead offer them your forgiveness. You may object, "They don't DESERVE to be forgiven."

That may be true, but neither do we deserve to be forgiven by God that's what grace is.

### **Story:**

Two friends walking across a desert wilderness. They began to argue and one of the men slapped the other. The man who had been slapped didn't strike back.

Instead, he wrote these words in the sand: Today my friend hurt me.

A couple of days later they were in mountainous terrain and one friend slipped and fell and was hanging onto a ledge. The same friend who had slapped him two days earlier reached out and pulled him to safety.

The rescued friend took a chisel and chipped these words into the rock wall: Today my friend rescued me.

The other friend was puzzled. He said, "Two days ago, when I slapped you, you wrote about it in the sand. Today, when I rescued you, you wrote about it in the rock. Why?"

The grateful friend said, "The secret to joy in life is this: Write all your insults in sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase them.

But write all your praises in stone so they will remain for all your life."

### **3. Ask for forgiveness.**

The third area that you may need forgiveness in your life may be that you have wronged someone, and you need to ask him or her to forgive you.

**Ephesians 4:32**, *And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

May the Lord also help you forget what you have forgiven!  
So that you may be doubly fruitful in every area of your life.