**Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is probably the most important step, yet difficult step, for most people when it comes to healing. Unforgiveness is the cause for the enemies' foothold in Ephesians chapter 4, and it is the subject of the parable following Jesus’ command to Peter in Matthew 18. Peter asks how many times do I forgive my brother, "Up to seven times?" Jesus replies, “Seventy times seven” and then shares a parable.

Then, in Ephesians 4:32 Paul encourages us to love and forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Paul says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

And again, in Colossians 3:12-13 we are told, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.”

Forgiveness is **NOT**:

* Forgiveness is not tolerance
* Forgiveness is not trust
* Forgiveness is not a feeling
* Forgiveness is not forgetting
* Forgiveness is not generosity
* Forgiveness is not enabling
* Forgiveness is not something a person deserves
* Forgiveness is not letting someone “off the hook”

Forgiveness **IS**:

* Forgiveness is a decision
* Forgiveness is an act of the will
* Forgiveness is a full pardon
* Forgiveness is obedience
* Forgiveness is picking up our cross
* Forgiveness is freedom
* Forgiveness is a way of life
* Forgiveness is trusting God to appropriate righteous judgement

Additional Considerations

* Forgiveness is an act of your will; it is not a feeling.
* When unforgiveness occurs in a relationship **both** individuals are negatively affected.
* It is not necessary for the other person to know that you are forgiving them. They may not even be aware that they have offended you, or they may have passed away, or are no longer in your life. This does not change your need to forgive.
* In addition to forgiving others, it is important to ask forgiveness where **you have offended**.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The question for many of us is not a matter of whether we are to forgive, but instead how we are to forgive. You may find it helpful to begin the process by stating out loud:

"**I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the name of Jesus."**

By approaching forgiveness with a statement of intent it seems to back the enemy off of the foothold he has gained. Repeat this statement of forgiveness until your feelings line up with the intent of your will. You may feel lead to cry and may experience a physical feeling of a burden being lifted. Continue saying this until you feel entirely free. Some individuals find they need to repeat this statement of intent 20-30 times before the hold is broken. When you are free, the emotion associated with the memory is gone. Then you will be able to think about the person and the related events and your memory will be intact, but the feelings of anger, rage, frustration and bitterness will be gone.