

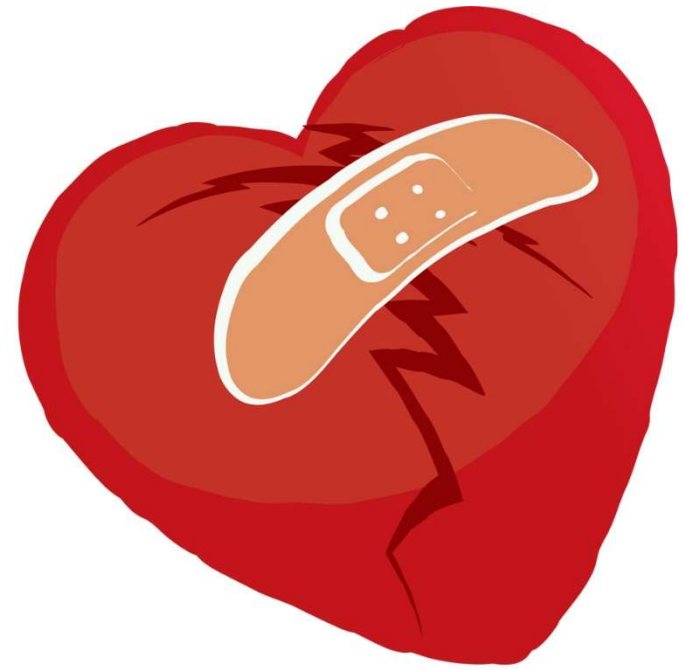
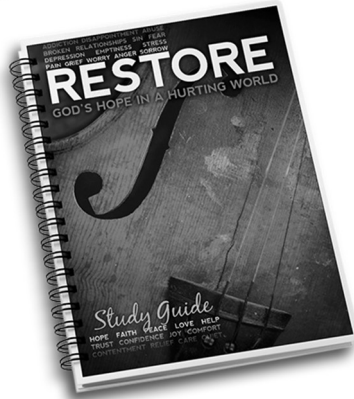
Resources & Events:

Restore: God's Hope in a Hurting World

By Pastor Tim Lovegrove

A study to bring strength and comfort to people facing the challenges and hurts of this broken world

Materials available at
www.therestorestudy.org



THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

A Grace Bible Church Community Seminar
Pastor Tim Lovegrove, Speaker

Saturday, January 16
10:00am – 2:00pm



www.findhope.net

As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12

Counterfeit Gods, by Timothy Keller
Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry, by Peter Brain
Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault, by Justin and Lindsay Holcomb
Bitterness: The Root that Pollutes, by Lou Priolo
Bad Memories: Getting Past Your Past, by Robert D. Jones
Forgiving Others: Joining Wisdom and Love, by Timothy S. Lane
Freedom from Resentment: Stopping Hurts from Turning Bitter, by Robert D. Jones
Help! I Can't Forgive, by Jim Newcomer
Help! My Spouse Has Been Unfaithful, by Mike Summers
 "Forgiveness" by J.D. Stark, in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*
The Gospel According to Matthew (Pillar New Testament Commentary), by Leon Morris
Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds, by Chris Brauns
Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom, by Nancy Leigh DeMoss
Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem, by Robert D. Jones
The Truth About Forgiveness, by John MacArthur
The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflicts, by Ken Sande (see www.peacemaker.net for extensive resources)

- That you don't care about justice.
- That everyone must ignore the need for change in the person who has done wrong.
- That there are no penalties for what has been done wrong.
- That there should be no safeguards put into place.
- That the wrong must be ignored if it happens again.
- That the wrong can never be talked about with the offender again.
- That the person who has been wronged can never tell anyone.
- That trust has been fully restored.

- That your relationship will be just like it was before.
- That reconciliation will happen.
- That all of your negative or hostile feelings toward the other person will immediately go away.
- That you'll never think about that wrong again.

"Forgiveness is a work of God's love in the human soul that compels one to give oneself for another, despite being sinned against, so that the other might love God more deeply." (Robert Cheong, cited in *Rid of My Disgrace*, 134)

Helpful Resources:

Forgiveness: "I Just Can't Forgive Myself!" by Robert D. Jones

Most of the principles are the same: you still want to release vengeance to God, express forgiveness to them, and commit yourself to continuing forward in love. The difference is that you don't confront their sin in the same way that you would with a Christian, because you understand that their greatest need is for the gospel itself, not for help with that particular sin.

Does forgiveness cause revictimization?

It shouldn't cause revictimization if handled wisely and patiently. Even secular research is recognizing the power of forgiveness for victims (see Holcomb and Holcomb page 138). Withholding from them the opportunity to forgive could be very damaging.

However, revictimization could definitely occur if forgiveness is handled in a rushed or sloppy way. It is very important to keep in mind all of the statements earlier in this booklet about what forgiveness does *not* mean. Revictimization is likely to occur if we misunderstand or ignore any of those key principles.

In situations that involve an authority taking advantage of someone under their authority (such as teacher/student, parent/child, youth worker/teen), great caution must be used throughout the process of seeking to help the victim grant forgiveness.

What does it mean to forgive myself?

The Bible doesn't ever speak about forgiving ourselves or present that as a solution for our problems. This doesn't mean that we should dismiss the idea entirely, but that we should look further to see what heart struggles are prompting this concern. The booklets by Robert D. Jones titled *Bad Memories: Getting Past Your Past* and *Forgiveness: I Just Can't Forgive Myself* are recommended.

What if the wrong was done to me or by me long ago?

The general principles about forgiveness don't change, though wisdom or practical circumstances may lead you to handle the situation differently than you would if it occurred today. If a serious wrong was done many years ago, don't underestimate the potential power of seeking or offering forgiveness even today.

Conclusion

What Forgiveness Is

Forgiveness is love.

Forgiveness usually involves some type of release.

Releasing someone from repaying a debt to you.

Releasing judgment to the proper authorities.

Forgiveness is a commitment to bear the wrong ourselves.

"When there is a debt, someone must pay. Either the one who owes must pay it back, or the one who is owed must absorb the loss." "The person who forgives no longer expects to be repaid for what he has suffered and lost." (Timothy Lane)

"No one who is seriously wronged can 'just forgive' the perpetrator [he means, at no cost]. If you have been robbed of money, opportunity, or happiness, you can either make the wrongdoer pay it back or you can forgive. But when you forgive, that means *you* absorb the loss and the debt. You bear it yourself. All forgiveness, then, is costly." (Timothy Keller)

Forgiveness is mercifully unfair.

"Forgiveness always looks wrong in the eye, names it for what it is, feels the sting. Then you consciously act 'unfairly' in return. Anger is always about fairness ... but forgiveness is mercifully unfair.... If you forgive me, you do me an uncanny kindness."

"Forgiveness is a courageous clear-minded choice to be mercifully unfair." (David Powlison)

Forgiveness can relate to something judicial, but usually it is something relational.

"Forgiveness may be described as a decision not to consider a debt or offense in connection with the debtor or offender's relationship to the creditor or offended." (*Lexham Theological Workbook*)

Forgiveness releases justice to God and any appropriate earthly authorities.

Forgiveness is "an event and a process." (Lane)

"Forgiveness is something that is done in a moment, but needs to be reconfirmed consistently." "That choice needs to be lived out and reaffirmed each day." (Peter Brain)

Forgiveness is not optional.

Forgiveness is something that needs to be empowered by God.

"The factory default mode of every person is to be 'unmerciful' (Romans 1:31)." (Jim Newcomer)

Forgiveness is done by forgiven people.

Luke 17:4-5 *Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"*

1 Corinthians 13 hope is a key element of love

What do I do when a situation is so complicated that I can't even figure out what forgiveness would mean?

What do I do when I just can't forgive?

- Remember it is supernatural, and so we have to seek God's strength to forgive.
- Remember it is based on the gospel, so we have to deeply understand the gospel of forgiveness for our own sin.
- Don't hide from God.
- Instead of just seeing forgiveness as a black and white matter, view yourself on a path toward forgiveness.
- Get help to look honestly at the fears that might be holding you back.

Is anything different if the person who wronged me is not a Christian?

What Forgiveness Looks Like

- Be encouraged that remembering a hurt does not necessarily mean that you have not forgiven. Don't despair.
- Face your thoughts seriously by writing them down.
- Consider that you might be doing things to keep the memory fresh.
- Be sure you are seeing your own sin, and not just focusing on the sin of others.

What do I do if I want to offer forgiveness to someone, but they don't agree with me about the wrong?

What if the wrongdoer continues to sin against me, though they often ask for forgiveness?

What if the wrongdoer states that they intend to continue doing the wrong?

- Release vengeance to God.
- Maintain an attitude of love and forgiveness in case they repent.
- Get help.

What do I do when I lose hope that someone will ever change?

The Damaging Alternatives

Direct vengeance by causing harm

Indirect vengeance by withholding love

Indirect vengeance by withholding communication

Manipulation by withholding forgiveness

Blackmailing

Grumbling

Gossip / Public Humiliation

- Come back later and ask again.

How do I respond when someone asks me for forgiveness?

- Listen: don't assume you understand what they mean.
- Don't force them to rehearse every painful detail if you know they understand already.
- Don't minimize the sin or its painful consequences for you.
- Don't maximize the sin and its painful consequences for you.
- Humbly point to the gospel if possible.
- If appropriate, encourage them with God's sovereignty.
- Offer to help, serve, and love.

What do I do if I tell someone I forgive them, then later realize I really didn't?

What do I do when someone else insists that I haven't really forgiven them?

What do I do when I can't stop thinking about a wrong done to me, though I have tried to forgive?

- 1) Name the wrong that you did, 2) say that it's wrong and you don't want to do it again, 3) try to express that you understand that you hurt them, and 4) ask them, "Will you forgive me?"
- Say more than "I'm sorry."
- Don't make excuses.
- Even if they did wrong too, that is not the time to mention it.

Bitterness / Resentment

"It's easy to skimp on forgiveness, refraining from outward evidence of an unforgiving heart, but nursing up a grudge against one who has offended us." (Leon Morris)

"the wasted emotion"

What can I do when it feels like someone else won't forgive me, or isn't truly acting as if they forgave me?

- Consider whether you asked for forgiveness in a genuine way.
- Humbly consider whether similar problems are continuing.
- Graciously recognize that their feelings are fighting against their will, and it's a struggle to live in forgiveness a day at a time.
- Humbly recognize that granting forgiveness does not immediately rebuild trust.

What do I do if someone refuses to forgive me?

- Don't demand it.
- Be patient.
- Be sympathetic and gracious.
- Carefully plan ways to bless them.
- Pray for them.

What the Bible Says

Nehemiah 9:17 *They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them.*

Psalms 86:5 *You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.*

Matthew 26:28 *This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

Ephesians 1:7 *In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace*

Psalms 103:10 *He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

Hebrews 10:18 *And where [their sins and lawless acts] have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.*

Does every wrong have to be personally addressed and forgiven?

Proverbs 10:12; Proverbs 19:11; 1 Peter 4:8

Do I have to actually tell the wrongdoer that I forgive them?

Should forgiveness be withheld until the wrongdoer seeks it?

Should you tell a person that you forgive them even if they haven't sought your forgiveness?

Luke 17:1–5 ¹ Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. ² It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³ So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. ⁴ Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them." ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

How do I ask for forgiveness?

Colossians 3:12-13 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Romans 12:19-21 *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Luke 23:33-34 *When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

Psalm 86:5 *You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 10:43 *All the prophets testify about [Jesus] that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Other passages to study: Genesis 50:17; Exodus 32:32; Exodus 34:7; Leviticus 4; Leviticus 5; Numbers 14:18-19; Deuteronomy 29:20; 1 Samuel 25:28; 1 Kings 8:30ff.; 2 Kings 24:4; 2 Chronicles 6:21ff.; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Nehemiah 4:5; Psalm 25:18; Psalm 32:1; Psalm 65:3; Psalm 79:9; Psalm 99:8; Psalm 130; Isaiah 6:7; Jeremiah 18:23; Jeremiah 31:34; Jeremiah 36:3; Daniel 9:9; Matthew 9:1-6 (with Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26); Matthew 12:31 (with Mark 3:28-29, Luke 12:10); Mark 1:4 (with Luke 3:3); Mark 4:12; Luke 1:76-79; Luke 7:47-49; Luke 17:1-5; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; Acts 8:22; Acts 13:38; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 2; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Hebrews 9:22; James 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9

Hard Questions about Forgiveness

Romans 4:7 *Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Matthew 6:9-12 *This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."*

Mark 11:25-26 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.*

Matthew 18:21-35 ²¹ *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"* ²² *Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."* ²³ *Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.* ²⁴ *As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him.* ²⁵ *Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.* ²⁶ *"At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'* ²⁷ *The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.* ²⁸ *"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay*

back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ *"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'* ³⁰ *"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.* ³¹ *When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.* ³² *"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.'* ³³ *Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'* ³⁴ *In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.* ³⁵ *"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*