

Q & A Sunday - May 27, 2018 - Gary Stebbins

Question: Have I really forgiven someone if I keep thinking on their wrong?

Most of us have at some point in our lives had to deal with issues of forgiveness/unforgiveness.

One of our greatest struggles in trying to live a holy life is how we respond to those who have

offended us or hurt us in some way.

The problem is that, in the moment, when someone who has offended us, we have

strong feelings of self-justification.

I have a right to be angry/retaliate- certainly that person does not deserve my forgiveness.

So, how do we handle our response to being justifiably wronged by someone else?

First, we must remember that our ...

>responsibility before God is not the behavior of other people, but

>responsibility before God is for our response to their behavior.

God is concerned with how we respond to them, not with us changing/punishing them.

Anger, self-pity, whining, silent treatment, moping around are typically not proper responses.

Ask God- how to respond in loving/humble way.

The challenge we face in the NT is ...

1 Pet 3:9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead ...

Luke 6:27-28 (NASB)

27 "... do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

John Piper has an excellent illustration to help us understand if we have truly forgiven someone.

He compares physical hurt to emotional hurt.

When Paul was beaten w/39 lashes, even after forgiving those who beat him, there were large

wounds on his back- would hurt for weeks.

Those wounds- constant reminder of the beating.

Just like physical pain- when someone offends us there can be emotional pain that lingers long

after we have forgiven the other person.

That emotional pain is a reminder of the offense.

That emotional pain is not necessarily in and of itself, sinful or a sign of unforgiveness.

It is part of the human experience as we heal.

However- need to be careful, because- emotional pain can change into resentment/bitterness.

Four suggestions to help prevent this emotional pain from turning into unforgiveness:

1. Do what Jesus did

1 Pet 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

Take our sense of being wronged- hand it to God.

2. Direct your thoughts away from the hurt

Phil 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Discipline your mind to think on something other than the offense.

3. Renounce all tendencies- punish- other person

Our responsibility is not to change/punish them.

Our responsibility- how- respond to their behavior.

4. Work for the good of the one you have forgiven

Real sign of forgiveness- you do not try to punish the other person but you seek for their good.

Safe guard against unforgiveness- pray for them- this helps drain away the emotional pain.

Additional Thought

As mentioned- when offended- may not believe- other person deserves our forgiveness.

We must remember- when God forgave us- we did not deserve it/could not earn it.

Because we did not deserve it/could not earn it- He extended mercy to us and forgave us.

Forgiveness is not for those who deserve it.

Those who have offended us may not deserve forgiveness either, but ...

we extend mercy to them/forgive them, as God extended mercy to us/
forgave us.

We were undeserving of God's forgiveness, they are undeserving of our
forgiveness, but we
love them as God loves us- extend mercy.