



When you need to forgive and need forgiveness

Forgiveness, together with grace, is what makes the gospel of Jesus Christ different from any other religion. Forgiveness builds on the foundation of grace. At least 95% of our daily life consists of relationships. Because all of us are imperfect human beings, we sin against God, each other and ourselves. That is why we have a constant need for forgiveness. In 2 Cor.5:19-20 the Lord gives each believer the ministry of reconciliation, which includes the ministry of forgiveness. It is often not easy to forgive, but it is not impossible.

Practical guidelines when you need to forgive others

1. We have to do two things when we forgive: we have to cancel the debt of the person who sinned against us and we have to declare righteous the person who sinned against us. This means that as Jesus forgave our sins and then declared us righteous, we also have to do the same for others.
2. Corrie ten Boom said, “Forgiveness is not an emotion. To forgive is an act of the will and a person’s will can act regardless of the temperature of the heart.” Because many people live by their emotions, they find it difficult to forgive. First, we have to choose to forgive. When we remember that Jesus forgave us a lifetime of sin, the choice becomes easier. How much easier it is to forgive someone who wronged us only in small ways.
3. It is a command of God to forgive: up to seventy-seven times per day. Adam Thomas said, “He who desires mercy and grace, but does not demonstrate it to others, is burning the bridge on which he has to walk himself.” We seldom have the strength and willingness to forgive. We get the power and willingness to forgive from the Spirit of Christ.
4. Unforgiveness and bitterness are often rooted in emotional pain from the past. Deal with every form of pain (rejection, contempt, humiliation, injustice, etc.) from your past. Forgiveness is the first step to deliverance from bitterness and emotional pain.

Scripture portions for prayer when you have to forgive

Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly, so you will not share in his guilt. (Lev.19:17)

You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. (Ps.86:5)

*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
(Prov.25:21)*

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. (Isa.43:25)

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. (Matt.5:7)

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.' (Matt.5:38- 9)

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' (Matt.5:43-44)

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matt.6:12; 14-15)

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matt.18:21-22)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:25)

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luk.6:35-37)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (Luk.23:34)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom.12:14, 21)

Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Cor.13:5-7)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Eph.4:31-32)

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Heb.12:14-15)

Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! (James 2:13)

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. (1 John 3:15)

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. (1 John 4:20)

Practical guidelines when you need forgiveness

1. We need God's forgiveness daily, because we sin every day. Because we are sinners who sin against others, we continuously need to receive forgiveness from other people. Nobody can live without forgiveness – at least not meaningfully.
2. Whether we sin against God or people, the road to forgiveness is simply to ask forgiveness. People often realise that they are guilty, but they do not act and ask forgiveness.
3. When a Christian sins, it hinders communication with God and prevents the Holy Spirit from working. When you confess your sin and ask forgiveness from God you must not do it half-heartedly. Admit and confess everything. Ask the Lord to show you the depth of your sin and confess whatever you understand.
4. Do not confess vague feelings of guilt and sinfulness, but ask the Spirit of God to show you clearly what you did and confess those specific things. Remember that the Holy Spirit will often stop reminding us of other sins if we do not confess those sins that we are aware of. Do not nurse sin.
5. When we have sinned against a person, it is important that we do not try to show that person where he/she was also wrong. Do not say, "Because you did this or that, I behaved this way." It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the other person of sin. Do not make excuses for yourself. Do not shift part of the blame. Do not tell a person that if he/she admits to certain things, you will also admit what you did and ask forgiveness.
6. Sometimes you may feel as if you did nothing wrong (and it might be that you did not). Then ask forgiveness for every deed or word that could have been hurtful to the person, or that came across as hurtful and wronged the person.

Scripture portions for prayer when you need forgiveness

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” (Ex.34:6-7)

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.” (2 Sam.12:13)

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chron.7:14)

Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. (Ps.25:16)

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. (Ps.32:1-2)

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. (Ps.51:4, 9)

He who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. (Ps.103:3)

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Ps.103:10-12)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. (Ps.130:1-4)

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. (Prov.28:13)

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.” (Isa.1:18)

Surely, it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back. (Isa.38:17)

You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Mic.7:19)

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. (Matt.5:23-24)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom.8:1)

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. (Rom.8:33)

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? ...And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor.6:9-11)

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Cor.5:19)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. (Eph.1:7)

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

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)