



FORGIVING FROM THE HEART

Dr. Stephen Seamands

Introduction – The Crucial Importance of Forgiveness

Matthew 18: 21-35

“There is no greater blockage to a person’s receiving healing from God than that person’s refusal to forgive others.”--Charles Kraft

I. THE SEVEN STEPS IN FORGIVENESS

1. FACING THE FACTS

“Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin...and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice...”--C.S. Lewis

“The truth will set you free--but first it will make you miserable.” --Jamie Buckingham

“There were nails in my soul which were causing pain. But I had gotten so used to them, I hardly felt them...They were old and rusty, big and small nails, but like my stubborn father I didn’t want to admit they were there or that it hurt...Before I could forgive those who drove them in, I had to admit they were there.”

You cannot confess to God what you will not first admit to yourself.

2. FEELING THE HURT

“The great challenge is living your wounds through instead of thinking them through. It is better to cry than to worry, better to feel your wounds deeply than to understand them, better to let them enter into your silence than talk about them...In your head you can analyze them, find their causes and consequences, and coin words to speak and write about them. But no final healing is likely to come from that source. You need to let your wounds go down into your heart.”--Henri Nouwen

3. CONFRONTING OUR HATE

“Only the person who feels the hurt and faces the hate will find the healing.”
--David Seamands

4. BEARING THE PAIN

“In every great forgiveness there is enshrined a great agony.”--H.R. MacIntosh

5. RELEASING THE PERSON WHO WRONGED US

“A genuine release of a genuine debt is at the heart of forgiveness.” — Miroslav Volf
The offender’s guilt can only be removed by the offended, who **TAKES THE HURT UPON HIMSELF/HERSELF** (whether it is requested or not) and gives up the right to blame the other person for what he/she is. This is forgiveness. The offended person then gives the offense, the hurt, the grudge and the offender - to God. Vengeance is left to God.

6. ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOURSELF

“People who smile when things go wrong have just thought of someone they can blame!”

What need is being met in you by your holding on to your pain and resentment?

7. LONGING FOR RECONCILIATION

II. THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS...

OUR PART - To Make a Choice to Forgive (Volitional Forgiveness)

“Sometimes you have to sent your will on ahead by express, but your emotions come later by slow freight.”

“If you can’t come to God with a broken heart, come to God for one.”

From this person I had suffered assaults that were irrational and weighted by envy, lying, and slander. But on this day a final act came to light, one that to me was and still is unthinkable, one designed to destroy me and all I held dear. The act went right to the core of me. In pain and amazement, I knew for the first time how in the passion of hate one person could kill another human being....I fell to my knees and cried out to God for help. “Please do not let me hate,” I cried over and over. Getting no relief, I phoned a friend to come over and help me pray. All afternoon, having thrown myself facedown over the living room ottoman, I cried out to God and my prayer partner cried out with me....Then came a moment when instantly my pleading was interrupted by an amazing awareness of Christ in me, and from that center where He and I were mysteriously one, forgiveness was extended to my enemy. It was as if Christ in and through me forgave the person (who can explain such a thing?)—yet I too forgave.—Leanne Payne

GOD'S PART - To Heal the Hurt and Cleanse the Hate (Emotional Forgiveness)

Heal the Hurt - "By his wounds we are healed"--Isaiah 53:5

Cleanse the Hate - "The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin"--1 John 1:7

SOME HELPFUL BOOKS ON FORGIVENESS

Dan Allender, *Bold Love*, Navpress, 1992.

David Augsburger, *The Freedom of Forgiveness*, Moody Press, 1988.

Helping People Forgive, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996.

Doris Donnelly, *Putting Forgiveness into Practice*, Tabor Publishing, 1982.

Learning to Forgive, Abingdon Press, 1979.

Robert D. Enright and Joanna North, ed., *Exploring Forgiveness*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

Beverly Flanigan, *Forgiving the Unforgivable*, Macmillan, 1992.

Terry Hargrave, *Families and Forgiveness*, Brunner/Mazel Press, 1994.

Robert W. Harvey & David G. Brenner, *Understanding and Facilitating Forgiveness*, Baker Books, 1996.

L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.

Dennis and Matthew Linn, *Healing Life's Hurts: Healing Memories Through the Five Stages of Forgiveness*, Paulist Press, 1979

Michael McCullough, Steven Sandage, and Everett Worthington, *To Forgive is Human*, InterVarsity Press, 1997.

William A. Meninger, *The Process of Forgiveness*, Continuum Press, 1998.

John Nieder and Thomas Thompson, *Forgive and Love Again*, Harvest House, 1991.

Stephen Seamands, *Wounds that Heal: Bringing Our Hurts to the Cross*, InterVarsity Press, 2003.*

F. LeRon Shults, Steven Sandage and Lisa Kiser, *The Faces of Forgiveness*, Baker Books, 2003.

Lewis Smedes, *Forgive and Forget*, Pocket Books, 1984. *The Art of Forgiving*, Moorings, 1996.*

Everett Worthington, *Forgiving and Reconciling*, InterVarsity Press, 2003.*

Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge*, Zondervan, 2005.