

...as He leads...

Confession, Repentance & Forgiveness of Sin

Definitions

To ensure clarity and understanding as you read this booklet it is important to be familiar with the meaning of the following terms:

Biblical confession

The Spirit-led act of telling God the truth about your sin and about His character. It involves both admitting what you have done wrong and agreeing with God's assessment of it. You specify your sin/s, and align yourself with God's perspective on it. At its core, biblical confession is bringing the reality of your hidden sin into the light of God's mercy.

Biblical repentance

True repentance is a gift of God (*Rom 2:4*). It's when you change your mind about your sin, make a firm decision to abandon it, and through prayer and the Lord's enabling, see your behaviour conform to God's Will. Hence, true repentance transforms you and makes you more Christ-like. You and others notice the change in the way you live and God is glorified.

Biblical forgiveness

The act of releasing your grip on the hurt done to you. It means giving up the desire to retaliate and/or demand payment for the wrongs you've suffered, instead entrusting the situation to God. In doing so, you release pain, anger, and bitterness, and open yourself to His power and enabling to extend the same forgiveness He has so freely given to you, to your offender/s.

Biblical reconciliation

The restoration of a broken relationship through the transaction whereby the 'offender' offers repentance and the 'offended' grants forgiveness. Hence, both move back into a place of relational peace, unity, and mutual kindness. It is the renewing of a damaged relationship taking you from estrangement back into genuine harmony with one another.

Note: due to the grievous and heinous nature of some offences, **reconciliation does not always mean the relationship can or will return to its original relational depth.**

For example, a formerly married couple will not necessarily remarry simply because the spouse who committed adultery has repented and been forgiven by their former spouse.

Even though in their hearts the relational debt between them has been cleared and emotional harmony now exists between them, the one wronged might desire to have no further interactions with their repentant ex-spouse. Or, if both have remained single, they may decide to remarry. Or they may decide to remain divorced but enjoy a friendship.

Another example is a survivor of physical abuse choosing to extend forgiveness to their offender who has shown genuine repentance. Their forgiveness may be expressed through a written message or passed on through a trusted intermediary, without any face-to-face interaction. Moving forward, they may also choose to maintain no further contact with that person.

Each situation is varied and unique, so you must seek the Lord for His wisdom and guidance on how your restored relationship should move forward after the transaction of repentance and forgiveness has occurred.

God's Will for your reconciled relationship is always best.

Pray for a knowledge of His Will, trust His leading, and walk in obedience. You won't regret it.

Confession of Sin

Before we can worship God in spirit and in truth (*Jn 4:24*), it is important to ensure we confess to our sins and the awful, often painful, affect our sin has had on God and others. **Harbouring wilful, unconfessed sin hinders our fellowship with God and His answers to our prayers** (*Ps 66:18, 1 Jn 1:6, Isa 59:2, 1 Pet 3:7*).

God calls us to confession not to produce shame and embarrassment, but rather to bring healing and restoration to our relationship with Him and with those we have hurt and offended. **Taking responsibility for our sin and confessing to it lays the foundation for forgiveness and reconciliation.**

Confession should always be about the spiritual cleansing of your own heart and come from deep conviction of your own guilt.

You should not blame other people for your sinful actions but accept that your sin is the direct result of the decisions you have made. **No self-justification is to be involved.**

You are not the result of what has been done to you. You are the result of what you have done about what's been done to you.

Confession is never to be done to broadcast your struggles in order to gain pity and/or attention from others. Neither is it to be done to expose the faults of others, to gossip, slander or humiliate others. **At all times, confession needs to be about your own personal sin and where you are guilty of wrongdoing.**

It should always be done with the aim of trusting in Christ for your complete forgiveness, cleansing and restoration (*1 Jn 1:9*). To this end, your **confession must be specific in nature and not vague.**

If we are vague, we miss the chance to identify patterns, root causes, and areas where God's grace can transform us and help us grow in holiness.

For example, "*I wasn't nice to my colleague today*", lacks the specific detail required to guide us toward genuine repentance and change.

Whereas “*I spoke sharply to my colleague this morning because I was jealous of their promotion*”, not only specifies what type of sins you are guilty of but gives an honest self-reflection of the motive behind the sin.

In being specific to this level with our confession, not only do we ensure we are truly owning our sin rather than minimising it, but we open ourselves up to receive the fullness of God’s spiritual, emotional, and physical healing & restoration. **Our sin is brought fully into the light and so the fullness of God’s forgiveness, healing, and transformative power can be received by us** (*Ps 32:3-5, 39:2; Prov 28:13*).

When you sin and bring it before God in confession, He will not only forgive you but cleanse you from the unrighteousness (*1 Jn 1:9*). So you should not meditate on your past sins in a way that produces guilt all over again. If guilt lingers after you have confessed, know that it does not come from God. Reject those feelings, for in Christ you are forgiven.

There is also no need to repeatedly confess to the same sin once it has been placed under His mercy. However, should you commit the same sin again, another confession should be given by you.

Remember, no matter how often you fall into sin and how guilty you might feel, you can, and should, always turn back to God. **His forgiveness is boundless.** Keep running towards Him, never away. He never tires of giving mercy to those who confess and repent with sincerity. (*Ps 86:5, Lam 3:22, Heb 4:16*).

Conviction of sin v condemnation: It is important to note that conviction of sin comes from the Holy Spirit, who lovingly reveals our specific wrongdoing to lead us to repentance and restoration (*Jn 16:8; Rom 2:4; 1 Jn 1:9*).

Condemnation, however, comes from the enemy, who accuses and shames God’s people in order to drive us away from Him and into despair (*Rev 12:10*).

Scripture assures us that “*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (*Rom 8:1*), reminding us that **conviction leads us back to God, while condemnation leads us to move away from Him.**

Who do we confess to? Whenever we sin, we must confess it to God (1 Jn 1:9). But the Bible also teaches that it's important to confess our sins to others when the situation calls for it.

As a general guide we should follow the principle that *our confession should be as broad as our sin's effect*. Scripture encourages us to confess to other people when:

a) We have wronged a person: If your sin directly impacts someone, you should confess your specific sin/s to that person and seek to be reconciled to them immediately.

Jesus commands us to prioritise reconciliation before offering gifts to God, emphasizing that right relationships with people are vital for our worship to be acceptable and pleasing to Him (Mtt 5:23-24).

b) When we are struggling in an area of sin: Sometimes there can be a sinful stronghold in our lives that is difficult for us to overcome on our own. In this situation the Bible encourages us to confess our sins to *one another, and pray for one another, so that we may be healed* (Jam 5:16).

This type of confession needs to be made to a trusted Christian pastor or friend/s.

The purpose of prayer support is to break free from stubborn sinful attitudes and actions that you are having trouble getting rid of on your own. It is not simply talking to a trusted friend about your sin just to relieve your guilty conscience. You must take it to Christ for forgiveness and cleansing.

c) When we publicly impact a community or church scandalously: For sins we have committed that damage the reputation of the Gospel and/or the church, a public confession to the affected parties or church is required. This helps repair relationships, upholds Christian testimony and forms part of church discipline (2 Cor 2:5-11, Gal 2:14, Acts 19:18).

Discipline is not punishment for its own sake but a means of leading the sinner into repentance and back into fellowship with God and His people.

Note, when someone genuinely confesses their sin and repents, they may still have to face justice and endure the painful consequences of their actions.

King David after committing adultery and arranging a man's death, subsequently experienced both God's justice in the loss of his son as well as God's mercy in being forgiven (*2 Sam 11*).

God did not punish David in the sense of eternal condemnation, rather He forgave him after his sincere repentance (*Ps 51*). But He did discipline David through consequences that corrected, humbled, and ultimately drew him closer to God. David's repentance was genuine, and his restored relationship with God became a testimony of His grace (*2 Sam 12*).

David's story shows that while sin brings painful fallout, God disciplines His children with the aim to restore them, not to cast them away. The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His child (*Heb 12:6*). God acts justly and loves mercy (*Mic 6:8, 7:18*).

Confession v Counselling: It is important to understand that confessing to others is not a form of counselling. Though confession to another person may sometimes take place in counselling, confession and counselling differ in their goals, scope, and the role of the other person involved.

Confession focuses on naming specific sins with the aim of forgiveness, reconciliation and growing in holiness. Often it involves another Believer as a witness, prayer partner, or source of accountability.

Counselling, however, is broader in scope, addressing the whole person (their emotions, behaviour patterns, and decisions) with the goal of personal growth, and guidance.

Biblically, confession is highlighted as a means of prayer and healing (*Jam 5:16*), whereas counselling is expressed in relation to there being wisdom found in the abundance of advisers (*Prov 11:14*).

Regarding counselling, it is important for us to remember that first and foremost, **Christ is our Wonderful Counsellor** (*Is 9:6*). If we ask Him, Jesus will always give us the divine wisdom and guidance we need for our situation. He not only knows our struggles but also provides supernatural solutions and comfort. Hence, Christ should always be sought first before approaching others for counsel.

Regarding confession, just because you admit to your sins does not mean you are willing to stop doing them. Confession alone does not guarantee a change in your sinful behaviour. This is why repentance is also required.

Repentance of Sin

Repentance is a gift of God (*2 Tim 2:25*). It is the Spirit-empowered transformation of your thoughts, desires, words, and actions. It begins as you stop believing your sin is an acceptable way to live and instead agree with God that it is wrong and hurtful to Him and to others.

By His grace, this recognition produces a genuine sorrow over your sin and its harmful effects on God and others, stirring a desire within you to turn away from it.

As this God-given change of heart takes place, you begin to seek the Lord's power and enabling to walk in His righteousness.

For example, because God says all lying is wrong you change your mind and no longer think it is ok to tell lies. You become truly sorry for lying and the hurt it causes the Lord and others, so you turn to Him in prayer for forgiveness and seek His power to speak the truth in love at all times. God forgives you and enables you to speak truthfully. As a result, you increasingly become characterised by, and known for, being a person who tells the truth.

Note: feelings of sorrow may not always precede genuine repentance. You can make a genuine decision to change your sinful behaviour and turn to God because you can see from His Word that what you are doing is wrong even though you may not yet be feeling sorrow for it.

As with salvation and forgiveness, repentance does not depend on the intensity of your feelings, but on the sincerity of your heart's decision to turn towards and trust in God.

False repentance: If you believe you have confessed and repented of your sin but there is no Godly change in your attitude, speech, or behaviour, and in all honesty, you really have no desire to change, your repentance is false (*2 Cor 7:10; Mtt 3:8*).

You may have confessed to the sin and felt sorrow for the painful consequences your sin brought you, but if you are not truly accepting of the sin itself as an offence against God and others, your repentance is fake.

False repentance is never honoured or accepted by God (*Mtt 27:4-5, Heb 12:17, Isa 58:2-10*).

True repentance: This is marked by a sincere hatred of the sin, a genuine desire for change, and a continual turning to God and His grace to bring about your transformation - even when you repeatedly stumble in the same area. If the longing of your heart is to truly be changed, your repentance is authentic. Consider Peter, though he denied Jesus three times, his tears of sorrow and his later faithful obedience revealed that his repentance was real (*Lk 22:62, Jn 21:15-19*).

When our repentance is real, we will produce *'fruit'* (*Mtt 3:8*). *'Fruit'* is the natural outward expression of a true righteous heart change that has taken place. It takes the form of changed thoughts, behaviours, words, and attitudes. It often involves making amends for your previous wrongdoing e.g. Zacchaeus paid back 4x what he had stolen in bearing fruit in keeping with his repentance (*Lk 19:8-9*).

Hence, **true repentance transforms you and makes you more Christ-like.** Everyone notices the change in the way you live and God is glorified.

Repentance v Penance: The Bible makes it clear that true repentance is the only path to forgiveness of sins and our Godly transformation (*Acts 11:18, 20:21; Lk 15:7*), and this is always through the finished work of Christ on the Cross. Jesus preached “*repentance for the forgiveness of sins*” (*Lk 24:47*).

Penance, when seen as acts of self-punishment or tasks to perform in order to earn God’s favour and forgiveness, is simply not Scriptural.

Note: Honest confession and genuine repentance are to be ongoing acts throughout a Believer’s life.

We don’t do this to earn God’s forgiveness; He has already forgiven us through Christ (*2 Cor 5:19, Heb 9:28, 1 Jn 2:2, Rom 6:1–2*).

Instead, we confess and repent whenever we sin because sin disrupts our fellowship with God and often damages our relationships with others (*1 Jn 1:6–7*).

Confession and repentance, along with forgiveness, are the means God uses to heal relational damage caused by sin and to restore fellowship (*Jam 5:16, Acts 3:19, Mtt 6:12*).

Forgiveness of Sin

The Bible speaks volumes about forgiveness, portraying it as a divine attribute of God and a command for Believers to obey (*Mic 7:18–19*). Scripture calls us to forgive one another just as God, in Christ, has forgiven us (*Eph 4:32*).

Jesus reinforced this by teaching that forgiveness is to be offered “*seventy-seven times*,” meaning without limit (*Mtt 18:22*).

God’s own forgiveness is immeasurably generous, never restricted by how often we fail, so long as our repentance is sincere.

Hence, our willingness to forgive those who hurt and offend us is to be boundless in nature too, forgiving others as often as is necessary for us to do so, just as God does with us (*1 Jn 1:9, Ps 130:4*).

Unforgiveness: It has been said *that “unforgiveness is like drinking a deadly poison and hoping the other person dies.”* The pain and anger that we would like to go away, lives on in our hearts, minds, and souls. All the while, the person who hurt us pays no price for the ‘poison’ in our soul.

When we cling to unforgiveness, it inevitably erodes our joy, diminishes our contentment, and limits our effectiveness in serving God and others.

The parable of the unforgiving servant vividly underscores the seriousness of refusing to extend forgiveness to others (*Mtt 18:23–35*).

Spiritual Consequences of Unforgiveness: Jesus teaches that our reconciliation with others is essential to our acceptable worship of God and to our spiritual health. *“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* (*Mtt 5:23–24*).

Hence, any unforgiveness we carry places a barrier between us and God and our own spiritual growth is hindered. Furthermore, the flow of God’s forgiveness and blessing in our lives is obstructed (*Mk 11:25–26*). Our forgiveness from the Father is tied to our willingness to forgive others (*Mtt 6:14–15*).

We can’t be hypocrites and expect to receive forgiveness if we are not prepared to give it.

Relational Consequences of Unforgiveness: Unforgiveness also erodes trust and weakens the bonds between people, often leaving scars that hinder future relationships.

When we cling to past hurts, we fall into destructive thought patterns such as *“I can’t trust anyone”* or *“Everyone will disappoint me.”* Such beliefs shut us off from new, healthy connections and foster resentment, anger, and emotional distance.

The cost is not only relational but deeply personal, weighing down our heart and straining our friendships. Unforgiveness obstructs the healing of fellowship and blocks reconciliation - the very growth and restoration God calls us to pursue.

Scripture warns us that we are to: *“See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled”* (Heb 12:15).

What Forgiveness is not: In determining what forgiveness is, it is often useful to first understand what forgiveness isn’t.

a) Forgiveness is not an option for a Believer. God commands forgiveness as the pathway to reconciliation and restored fellowship. *“...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive”* (Col 3:13).

b) Forgiveness is not offering the offender permission to hurt you again. Forgiveness is not the same as choosing to trust an offender again or restoring the relationship to what it once was.

Forgiveness requires only one person, but trust and reconciliation require the willing participation of both parties.

While it is always desirable that forgiveness leads to a full restoration, there are times when the offence is so horrendous and severe that trust this side of heaven has been irreparably destroyed. In such cases, forgiveness should still be extended, but full reconciliation is usually not possible and nor is it to be expected.

The Lord should be sought for His wisdom and leading regarding what level of relationship is to be had between you and your offender after repentance and forgiveness have been exchanged.

c) Forgiveness is not saying what was done to you was no big deal. The offence done against you is not insignificant. On the contrary, the very need for forgiveness shows the offence was serious. Sin brings real pain and harm, and ultimately is so costly that Christ gave His life to deal with it (*Rom 6:23; 1 Pet 2:24*).

If the person wronged uses phrases like, *“It’s all right...Don’t worry...No big deal”* they trivialise the seriousness of sin and ignore the reality of guilt. And when guilt is brushed aside, not only is the offender robbed of their responsibility to own their sin, receive forgiveness, and grow, it subtly teaches the false idea that sin doesn’t require confession, repentance, and change.

d) Forgiveness is not forgetting what was done to you. Contrary to common belief, Scripture never commands us to forget sins. In reality, significant sins are often impossible to erase from our memory. The pain we have endured at the hands of others may be severe, or the wrongs we ourselves have committed may be deeply regrettable.

And although we may desire to be released from the painful memory, it can resurface suddenly and without warning. Moreover, the lingering consequences of the sin often remind us how challenging it is to truly forget the act itself.

What the Bible teaches is not that God forgets our sins, but that He chooses not to remember them (*Ps 103:11–12, Isa 38:17, 43:25; Jer 31:34, Mic 7:19*).

As the omniscient God, He cannot cease to know, but He intentionally refuses to hold our sins against us. In His love and forgiveness, He chooses not to look at the sin, not to give it attention, not to identify us by it, and not to treat us according to it.

In the same way, when we forgive, we may not be able to forget the offence, but we can choose to purposefully not remember, refuse to dwell on it and not let it define the relationship.

e) Forgiveness is not excusing sin. Excusing sin is always wrong.

When the offender excuses their own sin it is wrong because it shifts the blame and responsibility away from them and undermines the very process God designed for their repentance, forgiveness, and fully restored fellowship.

When the offended person excuses the wrong done to them, they minimize their own pain, rob the offender of their need to repent, and accept a shallow peace instead of full genuine healing.

Even if the one sinned against doesn't perceive the words or actions as sinful, it is still helpful to respond with acknowledgement to the one confessing e.g. *"Thanks. I didn't see your words as sinful or harmful to me. But, since you are convicted of sin and are seeking forgiveness, yes, I forgive you."*

This approach neither trivialises sin nor denies guilt, but instead releases the offender from the weight of conscience while affirming the seriousness of forgiveness (1 Jn 1:9).

f) Forgiveness is not a feeling. Our forgiveness of another is not based on whether we feel like forgiving them or not. Forgiveness is a decisive, commanded action that directs our feelings.

We don't wait until we inwardly feel ready to forgive, rather we command our hearts to change so that we can forgive.

g) Forgiveness is not easy. Forgiving someone who has hurt you is not always easy, especially if the hurts have cut painfully deep and left gaping emotional, mental and/or physical wounds. In these cases it is not unusual for every fibre of our being to scream out for and desire some form of personal vengeance.

The choice to forgive often feels extremely difficult and may even initially appear to be impossible to you. These thoughts and feelings are normal. But remember, God supplies the strength we lack, enabling us to forgive in ways we could never manage on our own. As the Bible tells us, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (*Phil 4:13*).

And when we understand what forgiveness is and how important and valuable it is to God and us, we find ourselves actually wanting to forgive and taking steps to move closer towards it – even if our offender refuses to acknowledge their guilt and are not repentant.

Note: **Forgiveness is not conditional, it is commanded.** A Believer must forgive from the heart, releasing bitterness, surrendering the desire for revenge, and entrusting justice to God (*Mtt 18:21–35*). This is an act of obedience that does not depend on the offender's response. It is something you can, and should, do before God even if the other person never apologises, never repents, and never changes.

Reconciliation, however, is conditional; it requires repentance. Jesus explicitly ties relational restoration to repentance when He says, *“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him”* (*Lk 17:3*). In other words, genuine restoration only happens when the offender admits to the harm they caused and truly repents. Even then, reconciliation may be slow as trust is usually only rebuilt over time. Hence, without repentance, reconciliation is neither required nor wise. You cannot rebuild trust with someone who refuses to stop harming you. You cannot have peace with someone who denies the truth and you cannot reconcile with someone who refuses accountability. This is why Paul says, *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* (*Rom 12:18*). Sometimes it is not possible.

Furthermore, although repentance is required for authentic relational restoration, Scripture does not teach that repentance will guarantee *full* relational restoration. That is, it does not guarantee that repentance will lead to a return of the same depth of relationship the two parties previously enjoyed prior to the offence.

Neither is full relational restoration to be expected or demanded by a truly repentant offender.

Repentance removes the barrier of sin, but it does not erase consequences, rebuild trust, or obligate the wounded person to resume the relationship to the depth they had before.

Each person's story is unique, so reconciliation won't unfold in the same way for everyone.

Though some relationships may be able to be restored to what they once were, it is just as possible that the one wronged will never want to have any further relationship, at any level, with the one who grievously harmed them; even though they have genuinely forgiven them.

In some cases it is wise and acceptable for the wounded to maintain boundaries, even after the offender has truly repented. The repentant sinner is to accept this as a consequence of their actions.

Demanding reconciliation is itself a sign of unrepentance, because it centres the offender's desires rather than the harm done to the other person.

Repentance and forgiveness will, however, always lead to relational 'peace' between the two parties.

Animosity, bitterness, and rage on the part of the offended one will be replaced with a calm, gracious posture that no longer seeks vengeance or repayment from their offender. And the repentant offender will be freed from their guilt. Harmony is restored between the two even if no other level of relationship can be enjoyed.

As previously stated, it is imperative that you seek the Lord for His counsel as to how your relationship is to proceed with the repentant offender once you have granted them forgiveness. Trust and obey His leading on the matter for He only ever does what is best for you (*Rom 8:28, Ps 119:68*).

What is forgiveness? Biblically, to forgive means ‘to let go’. It is choosing to let go of our desires to ‘get even’ and ‘pay back’ our offender/s for the hurt they have caused us; instead choosing to allow God to take over and enable us to forgive as He has forgiven us.

Jesus teaches that forgiveness is a deliberate decision. An intentional act (*Mtt 6:14-15, 18:21, Lk 6:27-28, 23:34*).

When the one who has sinned demonstrates repentance, the one sinned against is to respond by extending forgiveness (*Lk 17:3*).

Thus, **forgiveness is in essence, a transaction.** Repentance is offered, and forgiveness is granted. In this exchange, the debt created by sin is released (*Col 2:13-14, Acts 3:19*).

To make it evident that forgiveness has truly been given to the repentant offender, the act is often communicated through a series of intentional commitments:

- ❖ **Forgiveness is** a deliberate choice to let go of the offence and refuse to replay it in your mind. It means we do not rehearse the incident inwardly or speak about it to ourselves in a way that keeps the wound alive (*Isa 43:25*).
- ❖ **Forgiveness is** a deliberate choice to release the offence and not raise it again as a weapon against the other person. It means we do not revisit the sin with them in a spirit of accusation or condemnation (*1 Cor 13:5*).

❖ **Forgiveness is** a deliberate choice to refrain from speaking of another's sin in ways that wound or shame the one you have forgiven.

To dwell on that sin after extending forgiveness, and to bring it up in a manner that is unhelpful, risks reopening old wounds and can lead your own heart back into bitterness (*Eph 4:29*).

❖ **Forgiveness is (*where possible*)** a commitment to pursue full reconciliation and to seek the full restoration of the relationship as it was before the sin (*Col 3:13*).

It is a deliberate choice to ensure the offence does not stand in the way of relationship.

Please remember though, the choice to forgive is not equated with the choice to trust the offender again or be fully reconciled to them.

As previously stated, although forgiveness is always to be given, sadly there are situations when full reconciliation cannot be had and nor is it to be expected.

The Bible teaches both forgiveness and wisdom. You can genuinely forgive someone and still choose not to entrust yourself to them again if doing so would invite further harm. Boundaries are Biblical (*Jn 2:24*).

It is important to seek the Lord for His wisdom and will in your particular situation.

How to forgive those who hurt you: Remember, as long as we cling to unforgiveness, we remain chained to past hurts, revisiting the incident/s over and over again in our mind, all the while wondering when...how... will we ever be set free from the raging inner torment.

The release to all your pain, anger, bitter resentment and emotional torture is found in forgiving your offender; even if they never repent, nor apologise for their wrongdoing towards you.

Whether they acknowledge their wrongdoing and repent or not, whether you are reconciled to them or not, it is in forgiving them that you are set free and healing, restfulness and peace are brought back into your life.

The path to forgiveness is different for everyone. Our unique personalities and temperaments, along with the varying types and depths of our wounds, influence the emotions that surface and the support we require. As a result, the process of forgiveness varies widely from person to person.

At its core though, forgiveness looks the same. It's making the deliberate choice to release our anger, pain, and desire to get even with the one who offended us, entrusting justice to God.

But how do we do that?

- i. First, we need to be willing to enter into the process of forgiveness, if for no other reason than because God says we should.

If you're in a place where your wounds are so deep and the very thought of forgiveness fills you with rage, where forgiveness seems so totally wrong, unfair and even impossible to you, praying to be made willing to forgive is where you start.

And if you are not yet even at that point where you could pray that prayer sincerely, then ask God to make you willing to be made willing to forgive.

- ii. Next, invite Jesus into the process of forgiveness.

Jesus is the Master Forgiver. He understands betrayal, heartache, rejection, physical abuse, abandonment, being despised, and false accusations. He understands like no one else can.

Our Saviour is called “a man of sorrows... acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). Simply ask, *“Jesus, help me. I invite You into my heartache.”*

When we invite Jesus into our pain and ask Him to help us forgive, Jesus doesn't look down on us for not being able to forgive our offender/s straight away.

Our Lord cares for us, understands and empathises with us. Instead, He leans in toward us, holds us and tenderly whispers, *“I know. I know everything they have done to you. I know what they did to you was wrong. I know your pain. I understand your feelings. I've felt it too. I can and will help you if you let me.”*

If you will allow Him to, our Lord will gently guide you through the process of forgiving your offender/s so that you can be healed and made whole again.

Remember, forgiveness is both a choice and a process that requires time. Allow yourself some grace as you walk this often long and painful road. However, when the journey becomes difficult, do not lose heart completely and never abandon the choice to forgive your offender/s.

Be encouraged and know that if you follow God's ways, if you invite Him into your pain, and if you keep making the choice to forgive, one day **you will** wake up with the realization that unforgiveness no longer has a hold on you. The process of forgiveness will have morphed into actual forgiveness.

It often doesn't happen overnight, especially with deep wounds. Depending on the nature of the offence and the depth of the pain it caused, it can take weeks, months, and in some cases even years before you reach a place of complete forgiveness.

If you are struggling with forgiveness, you might find this visual task helpful...

Picture your hand in a clenched fist.

Better yet, make a fist right now.

Picture the incident that wounded you (the one you know you need to forgive but can't quite find it in your heart to do so) inside your tightly held fingers, resting on your palm.

Each finger represents a reason as to why you haven't 'let go' e.g. it wasn't fair, they need to make it right, they skipped off to a new life while leaving you with their baggage, they sinned while you tried not to, you want them to pay for what they did. The list could go on.

Now, gently unfurl each finger, one by one, until the core offence lays bare.

Turn your hand over and drop the offence into the nail-scarred hands of Jesus and ask Him to take it from you.

That's forgiveness.

Releasing what you cannot bear into the hands of the One who can.

The pain...the anger...the frustration...the unfairness...the injustice...the anguish...the desire for payback. Everything.

Give it all to Him to take care of and deal with.

Let it go.

And if you ever find yourself in a position where you have picked the offence back up again and you are getting bitter and resentful all over again - repeat the step.

Forgiveness is a process. It takes time to truly forgive and heal.

Consider asking a friend to pray with and for you as you walk through the process of obeying Christ's command to lovingly forgive those who have hurt you.

Conclusion

To summarise, our life with God is dependent on forgiveness. And our lives with each other are also dependent on our willingness to forgive.

Let us be sure we forgive others the way Christ our Saviour expects us to forgive.

In terms of what our sin cost God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son, the level of wrongdoing committed against us will always pale in comparison.

Not only that, because we gladly welcome being forgiven when we are the ones in the wrong, in the same way, we should delight to extend forgiveness when others have wronged us (*Mtt 6:14*).

Scripture teaches us that forgiveness is both an act of love and an act of obedience.

Spiritually, forgiveness draws us nearer to God. Mentally, it breaks the chains of resentment. Emotionally, it opens the way to healing and peace. Together, these blessings nurture our physical well-being.

By contrast, unforgiveness isolates us from God, damages our relationships and weighs heavily on our mind, heart, and body as we cling to anger and bitterness.

Is it any wonder our heavenly Father commands us to forgive - it is the pathway to a life marked by wholeness, peace, and true freedom.

What loving father wouldn't want that for his children!

About Us

Mission Statement:

...as He leads... are ambassadors of Christ who through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit exist to glorify God, edify His saints and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in Fremantle.

Vision Statement:

To see every person in Fremantle repent of their sins, believe in Jesus Christ, confess Him as Lord, and dedicate their lives to walking in His ways.

Statement of Faith:

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is entirely inerrant in its original manuscripts (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-21) and is the unfailing final authority on all matters relating to faith and Christian living (Ps 12:6, Prov. 30:5). It is completely sufficient, containing everything necessary for salvation, spiritual growth, and equipping Believers for every good work (Ps 19:7-8, 2 Tim 3:17, 2 Pet 1:3).

We affirm the Biblical teaching contained in the historic Apostles Creed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Further information

phone: 0450 918 747
0473 626 382

web page: www.asheleads.com.au

Copyright **... as He leads...** 2026

Permission is granted to reproduce, distribute, and share this booklet freely for non-commercial ministry uses, provided the content is not altered.