



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

LETTING GO OF ANGER

Part 4: Anger and Forgiveness

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:30-32 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 6:12-15; 7:7; 18:21-35
Ephesians 2:8-9 | 1 John 1:9

SUMMARY:

There is awesome power in forgiveness.

It is God's solution for bitterness, resentment, and hostility. Avoiding the person who harmed or offended you isn't effective. Moving to a different job, city, or church is useless in battling unforgiveness. And even if you hide the effects of anger from everyone—even those closest to you—it is like poison to your entire system. You and I need the freedom found only through sincerely and completely forgiving others.

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

A Few Definitions

- **Anger** is a strong feeling of intense displeasure, hostility, or indignation as a result of real or imagined threat, insult, frustration, or injustice toward yourself or others important to you.
- **Forgiveness** is giving up resentment (anger) against someone, along with your right to get even, no matter what has been done to you.
- **Unforgiveness** is the deliberate, willful refusal to give up one's resentment and right to get even, based on the attitude that someone must pay for the wrong done.

Obstacles to Forgiveness

- **Lack of desire:** You don't want to forgive.
- **Rehearsing what happened:** Some people continue to dwell on the hurtful experience.

- **Pride:** We may believe the other person should initiate reconciliation.
- **Fear:** Some resist forgiving to avoid looking weak, being misunderstood, or feeling rejected.
- **Negative advice:** Well-meaning friends don't always offer godly counsel.
- **Partial forgiveness:** People try to pick and choose what offenses can be pardoned.
- **Relying on emotions:** Don't make the mistake of waiting until you feel like forgiving.
- **Expecting quick results:** Forgiveness can take time.
- **Justifying the other person's actions:** Some people will rationalize what happened so that they don't have to forgive.

Scriptural Teaching

The Bible clearly instructs us on forgiveness. In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus says that if we will not pardon others for their transgressions, then our heavenly Father will not forgive us for our sins. Although our *relationship* with God was settled when we accepted salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), our *fellowship* with Him suffers when we refuse to excuse others for their sins against us. In Matthew 18:22, Jesus tells Peter that he must forgive his brother "70 times seven" times. In other words, there is no limit. Because God has forgiven each of us of so much, we should also be willing to extend mercy towards those who sin against us (Matt. 18:23-35). The apostle Paul instructed believers: "Let all bitterness and wrath and

anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you” (Eph. 4:31-32). The Father desires for us to show mercy to each other because of all the compassion He has extended to us. But we can’t refuse to forgive others and then expect the Lord to forgive us.

Important Reminders

As a believer, it is your responsibility to take the initiative to deal with unforgiveness. It will not always be easy or quick. But you can’t allow it to take root in your life and turn into bitterness. Forgiving is difficult because it is unselfish. It involves laying down strong feelings and rights while releasing the other person from their need to make restitution. You may never forgive if you wait until you “feel like it.” And remember, forgiveness doesn’t always have to include going to the other person and confessing your angry thoughts. Only approach that individual if the Lord directs you to do so.

Steps to Dealing with Anger

First, **acknowledge that you have been totally forgiven**. God saved you by grace—not because you deserved it. He has freely offered His forgiveness your whole life. Second, **confess your anger to the Lord**. Recognize that your attitude has not been right. Be specific in describing your hostility and resentment. Third, **recognize that unforgiveness is sin**. Honestly admit that it is a violation of the principles of God’s Word. Fourth, **ask God to forgive you**. You may also need to admit to the other person that your attitude was wrong towards them. Last, **lay down the anger**. Through the power of the Holy Spirit and by an act of your will, choose to let it go.

Helpful Guidance

God will reveal whether or not you need to confess your unforgiveness to the one who offended you. If you approach other people

correctly, you may be God’s tool for healing in their lives. But make sure you simply ask for forgiveness for your attitude without going into *why* he or she angered you. Otherwise, you may end up making the situation worse.

What if someone has already died? If you can’t meet in person with someone, set two chairs to face each other. Sit in one and imagine the other individual sitting across from you. Then confess your resentment. You can also use this technique when you are having difficulty forgiving someone and want to practice confessing a wrong attitude before attempting it in person.

How to Know You’ve Forgiven

Here are a few clear signs that forgiveness is genuine. The harsh emotions you’ve had toward others will be replaced by compassion. Although the people may not change, you’ll be able to accept them without feeling bitter. You will try to understand why they acted that way. And you will feel thankful that God allowed the difficult experience to teach you more about the riches of His grace.

CONCLUSION:

Believers don’t have to hold onto unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment. We can be set free from attitudes that hold us in bondage. You and I can escape the chains of self-destruction that entangle those who refuse to show mercy.

When God reminds you of the people you need to forgive, I hope you won’t ignore His voice. It is my prayer that you bravely and wisely choose to deal with those feelings. My friend, allow the Father to set you free—you will never regret it. ✨



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