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## Forgiveness Part XI

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### If you are the Offender

If you are the person who hurt someone, and that person is unwilling to forgive you, it is up to you to make it right. You may not receive that person's forgiveness, but that is between them and God, and not you. You need to go through the steps of forgiveness, but with the emphasis on earnestly repenting and offering restitution. You need to confess, openly and publicly, before the person you offended. Then, you need to go to the person in private. Do not rationalize what you did, or minimize it in anyway. Then, go to Christ, humbly and with a repentant attitude—which means, you make a commitment to change your heart, mind, and actions!

If going to the person is impossible because of distance, death, or restraining order, then we need to totally rely on God. Take your lead from 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. This allows Christ to be your Mediator, and, know you are not off the hook for truly seeking repentance. Just because you may not be able to physically go to a person does not mean you do not have to forgive them. You can use a third party such as a pastor or a letter and definitely though repentance and prayer.

When we refuse to forgive or refuse to repent, then we are holding ourselves back from God and His best for us. We rationalize the reality of the infection of sin, and its destructive nature to our being, and to those around us. We create a wall to shut ourselves off from God, and one another. Thus, we turn on ourselves with the consequence, without any reprieve or comfort. Because we become consumed with animosity and vengeance, we then suffer with the guilt and bitterness. Our personal lives dissolve, and our impact on the community, as Christians, becomes a hindrance instead of a blessing. Take a serious look into Psalm 32. Meditate over it carefully, and then surrender yourselves over to the love of Christ. Allow the sin to be forgiven and released. Be courageous. Seek out forgiveness and public confession and reconciliation. Allow yourself to grow and mature to be the best, whole person Christ desires for you to be. There is simply no better way. This is liberation and true comfort:

True forgiveness comes from a sincere and humble Christian, offered with a merciful spirit, one who is not interested in their own personal feelings or making a display for the sake of pleasing others or seeking some form of spiritual prestige. Forgiveness will help us see Christ's perfection, what He has done for you and me and receive His mercy and grace to help us. Forgiveness will also help us help others through us, in times of need so we can find that peace that guards our hearts and minds (Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 4:14-16). In order for this to happen, we have to be willing and able to open and surrender our hearts and our will to Him. If not, we will be living on the wrong floor of life!

Forgiveness is not about selfish wish lists to get God to cater to our needs and whims; rather its true purpose is for us to be shaped by what He has revealed, and to grow in character, perseverance, and maturity. So, how can this be made real in you and your church? We are to forgive others in response to the fact that we have been forgiven. However, the forgiveness we may give to others will never compare to the

forgiveness Christ has given us! So, what blocks your seeking forgiveness from Christ and others?

“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. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!” (Psalm 32, NIV)

### **Questions**

1. Is the word forgiveness a friend or a foe for you now?
2. What causes conviction in you?
3. What do you need to do to be open and honest to see if you have offended someone where you need to go to them and see forgiveness?
4. How would you feel if they refused to forgive you? What will you do? Keep in mind it is not your responsibility that they forgive, you are only responsible to how you respond!
5. Read Proverbs 25: 21-22, knowing that for people filled with hate, the best way to hurt them back is to love them! How will this effect or empower you the next time you have to deal with a hateful person or an enemy?
6. Have you fully grasped the idea and call of forgiveness? What must you continually do to have a deep sense of the price that Christ paid for you?
7. Is duty something that comes to your mind when you leave church on Sunday? How important is duty to you and your faith?
8. Are you chasing your desires or our Lord? How can the answer to this question help determine what direction you take in life?
9. Why do we need to have Biblical mandates in mind? How can our willingness to surrender our desires for revenge, and the storage of wrongs for future bitterness be a personal help too?
10. Are you, or have you been worn out and in need of encouragement and hope? What can your Christian community do to help you forgive?

11. How do you find hope in the fact that even though your strength is depleted and no options may be visible to you, you are still in the hands of God?

12. How have you responded to His call of forgiveness? Why would you concenter not responding?

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