

What Happens When You Don't Forgive Yourself



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Welcome back to the last two sessions of this course, which is all about you. How to Forgive Yourself has two different sessions: What Happens to You When You Don't Forgive Yourself, and Steps to Follow to Forgive Yourself.

I want to talk about this -- what happens to you, and what happens to me, when we don't forgive ourselves? Years ago, one of the people that were in the Sunday school class that Darlene and I were attending -- a married couple that we were friends with -- the wife called my office, and talked to my assistant, and said, "Can I come see Dr. Wilkinson for just a few minutes about a personal problem?" And because we were friends, I said to my assistant, "Sure, that's fine. I would love to talk to her." So she came over; sweet lady; and I said to her, "What's the matter?" She said, "Would you mind closing the door?" I said, "I never close the door when I am counseling a woman". And she said, "Well, that's not about that. I've never told anybody about this, and I don't want anybody to hear it." I said, "Okay, I trust you about that".

And I told my assistant what was happening and I said, "If I don't come open the door shortly, you come open the door". So that wasn't about her; just about safety. So she sat there on the sofa, and I was in the chair, and she starts crying. I said, "Oh, what's the matter?" "I've never told anybody this. I've never told my husband this. I never told my parents this. I never told my best friend this. Nobody in the world knows this." And she says, "I think you're safe". I said, "Oh, I am safe. It doesn't make any difference to me what you've done. What's the matter?" She said, "I killed my son". "What? I thought you had two daughters?" "I do. But I had a son. Before I met my husband, I had sex with somebody else in college. And because I didn't want to drop out of college, I decided to abort the baby." And I didn't think it would be a big deal. Because that's what all my friends said, "There's nothing big about having an abortion", she said, "And I went and had an abortion. And when I walked out, I realized I killed my baby. And it was a boy." She said, "I can't have any more children; and I killed my only son." She says, "I do not have a day that I don't think about what I did".

And she says, "When his birthday comes around, for two weeks before and two weeks after I am in a terrible depression; and my family doesn't understand what's the matter with me". And she says, "Can you help me?" "Yes." "You can?" "Yes." And I did. And she was well before she left. The issue of the results of that are with her, but that wound that remained open for more than 20 years closed that day and healed. She still remembers the day, but there's no more depression. She learned that God wanted her to forgive herself, that there's no sin that you or I commit, including murdering our own children, that God can't forgive. Because that act she did was placed on Jesus 2,000 years ago, and he paid for it -- and there's no exception. And, God did not want her to keep living this way. He wanted her to get out of torment. Because, if you don't forgive yourself, you are delivered to the tormenters, as well. And if you don't forgive yourself, your sins will not be forgiven. If you don't forgive yourself, your heart will terribly get infected and change the rest of your life till you do forgive. I'm so glad she came.

You need to come to yourself. Because there's not a person in here who hasn't done some things to people that we love, that we'd give our right arm to undo. And at the same time, there are things that we have done to ourself, not to somebody else -- a major mistake. It doesn't have to be a sin. It can just be a real major mistake that traumatizes an investment you make. You leave a job, and you move and, it works out terribly, and your family is all disrupted, and they get angry at you for years about what took place. Whatever it is, those are the two things we have to forgive ourself over -- hurting other people and hurting ourself. I have to forgive myself for hurting you, and forgive myself for hurting myself.

Part 1: The Lack of Answered Prayers or Miracles

Now before I move into the specifics in this, I just picked out a verse that I want you to see. It's a surprising verse about forgiveness. It's this one right here. It's Mark 11. It's a well-known passage, except we don't connect the bottom half of it to this verse.

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, --So this is a prayer. Even though it sounds like it's not a prayer, it is a prayer. Whatever you pray believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Now we all think that's where that paragraph ends. But there is a big exception because of the next word – And. And. -- 25 And whenever you stand praying, -- What about? That the mountain be cast into the sea; whatever it is you are believing for. And whenever you stand praying, if you have -- read it to me -- anything against anyone, forgive him, -- Why? -- that your Father in Heaven may also forgive your trespasses.

26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Do you know what Jesus just taught here? You could have all the faith in the world; but if you have unforgiveness, forget your prayers being answered. Therefore, all the people who keep saying, “You need more faith, you need more faith”, if it's not being answered, ask yourself the question, “Do I have something against somebody still?” Maybe that's why He keeps saying no, no, no, until you forgive. Make sense? Answers some things, doesn't it?

All right Part 2. The first part was The Lack of Answered Prayers or Miracles.

Part 2: The Negative LifeChange that happens to anyone from Unforgiveness

I want to give you some characteristics of anybody who doesn't forgive.

Number 1: You develop the habitual response of being hurt of Unforgiveness. That when you don't forgive the first person; then the next person who hurts you, you'll probably not forgive them either; and then the next person you won't forgive. It's a habit. If, on the other side, you build a habit of forgiving people who hurt you -- and now I hope it becomes a life-long habit that you dread the thought of not forgiving somebody, because you know what's coming if you don't.

Number 2: You fear being hurt again, and you build walls around your Heart. We call those Heart Prison.

And I just have five observations beneath that:

[2.1] You build walls around your heart to stop people from hurting you.

[2.2] Number 2: You experience the slow death and shriveling up of your emotions. When you build walls around your heart, nobody gets in, but you die inside.

2.3: You enjoy fewer and fewer loving and affectionate feelings in your life. You kind of just dry up inside.

2.4: You notice that your heart has become hard and insensitive to others.

2.5: You respond to further wounds by increasing your heart walls.

How many of you know people that are just like this? Let me see your hands. We all do. They have walls a mile high. Somebody I love deeply has multiple walls that are a mile high. It does lead to depression.

3. You mistrust people and you misread their actions and their Motives. When a person is filled with unforgiveness, they misread other people.

4. Start this one. You develop feelings of insecurity, of a poor self-image, and your fear of Failure increases dramatically.

Number 5. As time goes on, the negative life changes from unforgiveness include: You become defensive, you blame everyone else, and fall into Self-pity. A lot of people have self-pity; and it all goes back to not forgiving.

Number 6. You struggle with anxiety and depression and you sin to find any amount of Comfort.

And, #7, you cannot seem to connect with God and you struggle with Isolation – isolation. You pull back from everybody.

Now let's turn to the next page, and go to Part 3. This is to prepare you to forgive yourself.

Part 3. The Experience of the Person Who Won't Forgive Themselves

And we have those 7 same stages in the Slide of Unforgiveness. But this, instead of other people, is what happens to you. For those

of you who haven't been able to forgive yourself; you are going to see yourself quite a bit here. And it's going to be eye opening to you. And if you have a child, perhaps, that has real self-hatred that's from unforgiveness toward what they did, you're going to see your children in these stories right here.

Stage #1 in your notes is Unforgiveness toward yourself -- unforgiveness toward yourself. You don't feel that you can ever forgive yourself for what you did, whether intentionally or accidentally, due to the amount of pain or damaging consequences that cannot be undone. You have numerous flashbacks of what you have done. You can't forgive yourself for what you did to others and to yourself.

Number 2. Stage 2 is Anger toward yourself -- anger toward yourself. As time progresses, you feel trapped, and try to stuff the painful memories. Often you feel unrelated anger, and may overreact with your temper and lash out. A person who loses their temper all the time has great self-hatred. There's no exceptions to that. They have not forgiven themselves. Or you may continue to suppress the memories and suffer from increasing and stubborn depression.

Stage 3: Bitterness toward Yourself. You change during this stage in the Unforgiveness Slide, and can become hard, untrusting, rebellious, sullen, and withdrawn. Often the internal distress becomes so strong that you start considering sinful acts and inappropriate relationships to give you comfort.

Number 4: Slander against yourself. You talk down about yourself with negative self-talk, and you then hear yourself criticizing yourself to others, "I'm not worth anything. I'm stupid. I'm damaged goods. I'm always going to be a failure." You know the terrible things you have done.

Number 5: Resentment toward Yourself. I want you to star this one. You keep track of all the stupid things you say and the hurtful things you do, even innocently. Things that never used to bother you now become additional reasons for your failures. You link previous mistakes and sins to a whole series of reasons that justifies your worthlessness, and the negative conditions of your life. Addictions are rampant in this stage, such as pornography, alcoholism, drug abuse,

physical and sexual abuse, adultery, prescription drugs for anxiety, anything to release the tension that gnaws away from you.

Sound familiar? How many of you know people that are in this trap? Let me see your hands. Isn't it something that we can get here by a mistake we made that was innocent; that brings about great pain? But because we don't understand what we did that brought about pain puts a wound in us. We're the ones who did it. Even if we are trying to help somebody, and that wound becomes infected, that slide that we're going through happens to everyone. It doesn't have to be a sin against God or a sin against a person.

I'll never forget -- I was at a conference and I was asked to be the keynote speaker to a bunch of millionaires. And there was 200 of them. And after one of the sessions, one of the men grabbed me and said... He was from Arizona; the southern part of our country. He said, "I need to talk to you". I said, "Okay". He said, "How about lunch?" "Okay." We went out to lunch that day and I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "My biggest goal in my life was to give a lot of money to God's kingdom". I said, "Do you have a gift of giving?" "Yes, that is my gift. And I'm good at making money." "Good for you. What's the matter?" He said, "I saved \$25 million, and I wanted to grow it so I could give away more money to God." "Wonderful." "But I invested that money for God in a whole bunch of stocks." "Ah huh." "And the whole part went bankrupt. And I lost \$25 million that I was going to give to God."

What was he revealing to me? Unforgiveness toward himself. So we talked all about that, and I led him through the process of forgiving -- not a sin; his motive was right, his method was the best he knew how, and he wasn't leaving room for an awfully big mistake. God wasn't angry at him. He didn't sin. He made a human mistake. And who hasn't made a big human mistake? And so, when he forgave himself, and apologized to God -- not for a sin, but just for the mistake -- his whole life turned around again. And he started making money again. And he had no more self-hatred and no more vengeance toward himself. Have not you ever made an awfully big mistake? Man, I have. Many. And until its okay with you that you made a mistake, it's not okay. That hurt. Okay. Do you accept reality? That's reality. I accept reality that I did that. It's okay with me. I let me...I let me out of my own prison. Good.

Stage #6: Hatred toward self. Your life continues to prove that there's nothing worthy about you. You feel inferior, bad, unlovable, or incompetent. You can't stand to be by yourself, and yet you don't feel worthy to be with anyone

else either. You become increasingly fearful. After all, if they knew what you've done, who would want to be with you? Self-hatred is a terrible condition that generates nothing but harm and pain. You are tempted to practice self-destructive behavior, such as alcohol and drug abuse, promiscuity -- who would ever want me except for sex? -- often you withdraw and feel hopeless and powerless to make any change.

Stage 7. And 7 is the worst condition that there is -- Vengeance toward yourself. Your inner desire is to make yourself pay for what you've done builds to the point that you take action. You can't cope. Listen to what you're reading here. You can't cope with success. Why not? Because you constantly feel that you need to pay for the terrible things you did. And success isn't paying for it. Therefore, you practice -- underline this -- self-sabotage... getting fired from your job, or spending yourself into terrible debt, or breaking long-standing relationships time after time. You may hide very destructive behavior such as eating disorders, cutting yourself, and face suicidal thoughts, and may even attempt suicide for what you've done.

There was another man I met in Atlanta. He called me one day -- got a hold of my home number -- and said, "I've read The Prayer of Jabez. And I want to start a fund to invest in other companies to make a lot more money that I can give for God. What do you think of this?" I said, "Are you sure you want to do this?" "Yes." "Will God love you any more if you do or you don't?" "What?" "Will God love you more if you do that or if you don't do that?" "I guess He won't, will He?" "No, of course He won't. He doesn't love you based upon what you do or don't do. He rewards you based upon what you do, but He doesn't love you more because of what you do. Are you sure you want to do this?" "Yes." I said, "Okay, be wise in what you do".

He got hold of me a couple of years later and he said, "Things aren't going very well". I said, "I'm sorry. Are you using good sound Biblical principles in what you're doing?" "No, I'm just trusting God." "You're just trusting God?" "Yes, because it is for God and I know He'll control my thoughts." "No, sir, He won't. You have to use your own self-judgment, and pray and ask God to help you, but you are the one making up your mind."

A couple of years goes by again, he calls me up, we have lunch at a

restaurant down the road. He said, "When I met you, I had made a vast fortune. I had a .com business, an internet business, that gave to our family a lot of money. Against my friend's judgment and my wife, I put it all in this foundation." "You did? Okay." "God let me down." "No sir, be careful. What do you mean He let you down?" "I invested in things for Him." "Were they risky?" "Oh, they were very risky, but they could make lots of money for God." "Okay. What happened?" He started crying at the table right in the restaurant. "I lost every single cent I had. My entire family's future is gone."

I said to him, "That's hard to cope with. Can you forgive yourself?" "No, I can't." "Sir, you need to forgive yourself. It's not the end of the world. You can make some more money. You don't have to be rich. I don't believe you sinned in a major way. I don't believe God's angry with you. I think you made some foolish decisions." He would not forgive himself. The next day he shot himself.

Not forgiving yourself is a big deal. He was all the way down to vengeance. If he had said earlier on, "I need to forgive myself for the mistakes I've made, and get back to using common sense", he wouldn't have lost his money, but he did.

Conclusion

What is it in your life that you don't want to forgive yourself for? Maybe it's an earlier marriage; maybe it's a business decision. Maybe you quit work, and thought you were going to be a pastor, and it failed terribly. Maybe you had a child, and you were too domineering, and they got angry with you, and were bitter toward you, and rebelled because they had unforgiveness toward you -- and you caused that in them. What is it? Will you choose to forgive yourself? Will you grant compassion to the person you live with -- you, and let yourself go?

The greatest gift of a man to another human is to forgive. It's a greater gift than loving somebody. And it may be the greatest thing God had ever done for you and me -- He forgave us. May you be a man or a woman who becomes known as a person who forgives. Then God will look down upon you and call you, "You are like Me; you forgive".

'Father, we just want to stop and pause. May this day change us forever to be men, and women, and young people who never again entertain the thought of not forgiving. May we run into the arms of the people who wound us, and love them, and bless them, and do good to them, and forgive them. Before we die, may You call us

one of the forgivers of the earth. And now, prepare us, as we move into the last session, to forgive everything we need to in our own heart. In Jesus' Name, Amen.'