

David Part12 | Unforgiveness & Rebellion | Pastor Steve Wells | 10.20.2019

Reply message at: <http://www.northpointeFL.org/messages>

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

Read the following devotional written by Charles Stanley from InTouch Ministries. Discuss with your small group and/or reflect on forgiveness during your own personal study time.

Charles Stanley: In the course of my ministry, I've talked with many people who've spent years in bondage because they were unable or unwilling to forgive someone. When they finally understood and applied forgiveness, they experienced an awesome freedom. This is a process we can't ignore if we want to become the people God created us to be.

Five Steps to Forgiveness

Step 1: Recognize we've been totally forgiven. Once we understand the depth of our sin and the distance it placed between us and God—and once we get a glimpse of the sacrifice He made to restore fellowship with us—we should not hesitate to forgive. If we comprehend God's forgiveness toward us but refuse to forgive those who've wronged us, then we're like the wicked, ungrateful slave Jesus described in **Matthew 18:23-34**. Although his huge debt was forgiven, the slave immediately demanded repayment of a trifling amount someone owed him. Realizing God has totally forgiven us of a debt we can never repay helps us learn the importance of forgiving others.

Step 2: Release the offender from the debt we feel is owed to us. This involves mentally bundling all of our hostile feelings and surrendering them to Christ.

We can accomplish this by meeting face-to-face with the person who wronged us or by using an alternate approach. In cases where this person lives far away, has died, or is totally unapproachable, it may be necessary to use the “chair substitution” method. Sit facing an empty chair, imagining the other individual seated across from you. Then, confess your resentment. You can also use this technique when you want to practice confessing a wrong attitude before attempting it in person.

Step 3: Accept people as they are and release them from any responsibility to meet our needs. We all know someone who blames feelings of acceptance or rejection on others. You may even be like that yourself. Certain individuals can make or break your day, depending on the amount of attention they pay you. This is a common trait in those who are unable or unwilling to forgive. However, when we decide to forgive as an act of the will, we absolve others of any responsibility to meet our needs.

Step 4: View those we've forgiven as tools in our lives. The Lord uses situations and people to help us grow in our understanding of His grace. Joseph certainly grasped this principle. He saw his brothers as instruments God used to place him in a position to save his family during famine. His brothers feared what he might do to get even, but he responded, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (**Gen. 50:20**).

Step 5: Make reconciliation. We are to re-establish contact with estranged friends, former co-workers, or family members—and an apology is a good place to start. We should do our part to restore fellowship with those who've hurt us. Once forgiveness is complete, reconciliation will be much easier.

*(Some situations are impossible for us to establish contact due to death or it may not be safe or wise to have contact. In these situations, we could use Charles Stanley's “chair substitution” method--sit facing an empty chair, imagining the other individual seated across from you.) *

After completing the five steps to forgiveness, pray this simple prayer:

Lord, I forgive (name of person) for (name the specifics). I claim authority over the enemy and take back the ground I've allowed Satan to gain because of my attitude toward (the person). I give this area of my life back to the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray this in His name and in the power of His Holy Spirit.

Remember, forgiveness is for our benefit. The other person's behavior may never change. It's up to God—not us—to change others. Our responsibility is to be set free from the pressure and weight of an unforgiving attitude. Whatever our pain or situation, we cannot afford to hold on to an unforgiving spirit. We must get involved in the process of releasing others from the debts we feel they owe us. If we keep our eyes on the One who forgave us, it will be a liberating force like nothing we've ever experienced.

[Adapted from "The Gift of Forgiveness" (1991)]

2 Samuel Chapters 13-18

- How could the story from today's message been different if there had been forgiveness?
- Think of a time where you forgave someone in the past-how did you feel after?
- Share-if comfortable- a time where you have been forgiven in the past?
 - How did you feel after?
- Is there someone you need to forgive now?
 - What is holding you back from forgiving them?