

HEALING OF THE EMOTIONS - V

"Forgiveness"

I. NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

- A. Dealing with unresolved anger
- B. Dealing with guilt
- C. God's command for us to forgive
 - 1. Eph. 4:31-32 - *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*
 - 2. Col. 3:12-14 - *"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."*
 - 3. *"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"*
 - 4. Mt. 6:15 - *"If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you"*

II. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- A. Setting us free and others free from bondage of guilt
- B. Forgiveness is not:
 - 1. Indifference
 - 2. Agreeing with wrong
- C. It is the act of the will--we actively choose to give up grudges despite severity
- D. Does not mean justice should not be served

III. FRUIT OF UNFORGIVENESS

- A. Emotions (negative)
 - 1. Minimizes or limits expression of love for someone you love
 - 2. Keep you in sickness
 - a. Corrie ten Boom reflecting on her experience in a Nazi concentration camp, *"Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. Those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids."*
 - 3. Unresolved anger (refusal to forgive) leads to bitterness, hostility, hate
 - 4. Pride the root of unforgiveness - a major roadblock to forgiveness
 - a. *"I'm superior to the person who hurt me; I don't need him"*
 - 5. Jealousy - a feeling of inferiority and seeing or believing someone has something you should have but don't.

- a. Left unchecked, jealousy can turn into envy
- b. Envy says, *"Not only do I not like you being or having a certain something, I want it for myself at your expense."*
- 6. Self-pity--feeling that no one has been hurt as much as we have
- 7. Chronic complainer gives way to action
 - a. Gives way to gossip, sarcasm, slander and arguments
- B. Actions
 - 1. Cruelty - deliberate acts to cause suffering, pain, or distress
 - 2. Violent fruit
 - a. Revenge - inflicting punishment or injury in return for a wrong done
 - (1) Violent acts
 - (2) Subtle modes
 - Giving someone cold shoulder
 - Not talking to someone
 - Assassinating a person's character
 - (3) Price of getting even (Excerpt from S. I. McMillen)
 - b. Suicide

IV. WHO DO WE FORGIVE?

- A. Resolving anger toward God
 - 1. Forgiving Him a matter of repenting or changing our attitude toward Him
 - 2. Admitting our anger won't shock God
 - 3. Tell God why we are angry
 - 4. Ask God to help us cultivate attitude of acceptance
- B. Forgiving ourselves
- C. Forgiving others
 - 1. Parents - they make us what we are
 - 2. Husband or wife
 - 3. Divorced spouse
 - a. Often divorce results when series of offenses and problems accumulate unforgiveness till the resulting resentment and bitterness crowd out love and commitment
 - 4. Other family members
 - 5. Fellow believers
 - 6. People from our past
 - a. Depression-prone individuals always conscious of a loved one or relative who injured them earlier in life
 - 7. Those who trespass against us

V. HOW TO FORGIVE

- A. By realizing wrongdoing
 - 1. Accepting our share of the blame
 - 2. By not getting caught up in one-upmanship
- B. Confession means admitting a sin or fault
 - 1. Common excuses (Bill Gothard)
 - a. It happened a long time ago
 - b. It was such a small offense
 - c. The one I wronged has moved away
 - d. Things have gotten better
 - e. I'm just being too sensitive
 - f. No one is perfect
 - g. They won't understand
 - h. I'll do it later
 - i. The other person was mostly wrong
 - j. If I purpose not to do it again, won't that be enough?
 - 2. Confession to others
 - a. Determine what we need to confess to others
Ungratefulness, stubbornness, untruthfulness, indifference, bitterness,
laziness, rudeness, thoughtlessness, resentment
Offend by being judgmental, unaccepting, inconsiderate, harsh and critical
Offend by misinterpreting actions, forming opinions, ignoring someone or
carrying chip on shoulder
 - a. Compile list of persons to ask forgiveness
- C. Reaffirming love
 - 1. Value others as equal
 - 2. Loving confrontation
 - a. Talk to person who has hurt you
 - b. Explain why we are angry
 - c. Focus on person's bothersome actions without condemning or accusing
 - 3. Exercise understanding
- D. By releasing the past
 - 1. Forgiveness is letting what was be gone; what will be, come; what is now, be
 - 2. In forgiving, I finish my demands on past problems and failures
 - 3. Cancel all predictions and suspicions of future failure
 - 4. What does it mean to forget?
 - a. Not keeping a record of the wrong or filing away evidence for future use

- b. Refusing to dwell on the event or to talk about it every chance we get
 - c. Looking ahead to the future
 - d. Saying good things about our offenders and doing helpful deeds for them
 - e. Allowing God to erase our painful memories
5. Forgetting is not a case of holy amnesia which erases the past
 Experience of healing which draws poison from the wound
 The memory is powerless to arouse anger
 No rehashing of old hurts

CONCLUSION

- A. Forgiveness means
 - 1. Our emotional response to our offender has changed from negative to positive
 - 2. We never give up on our offender as a human being, never deem him hopeless, never deprive him of a chance to make up to us
 - 3. Does not mean we try to teach offender a lesson first before forgiving, or that we demand repayment, that we act like it never happened, or that the offense did not hurt
 - 4. Does not mean there will be no consequences, no cost to be paid, no loss to bear
- B. Forgiveness restores the present, heals for the future, and release from past
- C. Brings reconciliation
 - To harmonize or settle a disagreement, to reunite, to make peace, to restore to fellowship and confidence
 - Whenever an offence, a disagreement, a hurt has separated two people, reconciliation is proof forgiveness has been given and accepted

A prayer of forgiveness

"Dear Lord, as an act of my will I will forgive _____ for _____. I do not feel like forgiving, but I am choosing to follow your commands. Please forgive my unwillingness to forgive, for that is sin. Cleanse me of anger, bitterness, resentment, and any of the other fruit of unforgiveness. Please help me to truly begin to love my offender. Help me to forgive as You have forgiven me."

Quote from None of These Diseases by S. I. McMillen: pp. 73-74

The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. It may be a luxurious car that I drive along a lake fringed with the autumnal beauty of maple, oak and birch. As far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain.

The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad, and strawberry shortcake smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it.

King Solomon must have had a similar experience, for he wrote: "Better a dish of vegetables, with love, than the best beef served with hatred."

The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom; but more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my innerspring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of the serfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath.

FROM CARING ENOUGH TO FORGIVE (pp. 10-11)

One-up-forgiveness is an emotion which exists solely in connection with judgment and condemnation.

To say, "I forgive you," is to say, "I have examined, weighed, judged you and your behavior and found you sorely lacking in qualities that are worthy of my respect. I have these qualities at this point in time, but you do not. I humbly recognize my superior moral strength and your weakness, my consistent moral behavior and your inconsistency or immorality. I forgive you your trespasses. We will henceforth have a relationship based on the recognition of my benevolence in the hour of your neediness, my generosity in the face of your guilt. You will find some suitable way to be dutifully grateful from this day forward."

The forgiven person is aware, consciously or unconsciously of being in a morally subordinate position. Permanently indebted, he or she must live out the repayment. This evokes resistance and resentment which clouds the relationship with contradictory emotions.