

Details of How to Forgive

If you are not yet convinced that forgiving is the only way to freedom in Christ, then again read Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 in “I Will Give You Rest.”

Once you are convinced, then the next important question is, “How do I do it?”

Forgive From The Heart

The key is that forgiving must come from the heart. It must be real. Because of this, reciting a rote prayer can be a mistake. We may come to rely on the words said and not on the heart change required. This is a real temptation, because reciting words is much easier than truly letting go of the resentment.

At the same time, it is sometimes helpful in the beginning to have some guidance of what to say. Therefore I somewhat reluctantly am providing several sample prayers. From the variety of samples, you can see that there is no magical set of words to speak, although we do need to actually speak words to accomplish forgiveness (though sometimes it would be most appropriate to say it under your breath).

One way to keep from getting into the rut of a rote prayer is to use a different sample prayer each time. That way you may not get hooked on the exact words, but will begin to grasp the principles involved. Know that the goal is for you to be weaned from all sample prayers, and to just speak spontaneously.

The Basics

One way to keep focused on the principles and not specific words is to keep in mind what forgiveness is, and why we need it.

The basic truth behind forgiving is that when we judge, we have taken Jesus’ place on the throne as the judge. We are never authorized to judge anyone or anything, even if they are in fact guilty. This judging is sin; and to get free from the consequences of this sin, we need to forgive so that we will be forgiven. When we forgive, we are stepping down off the throne, and are inviting Jesus to take that place. We are asking Jesus to take out the bitter root we just planted in our “honeycomb” (Chapter 3), and to fill that place with His presence. In this way we are actually changed into the image of Jesus in that place in us. If you are unclear about this, reread Chapters 4 and 5.

When we forgive and are forgiven by God, the spiritual work has been done. However, if in judging we have done something to damage our relationship with the one we judged, we also need to repair that breach by approaching that one, repenting and asking them to forgive us.

Who Do We Judge?

Those that we judge include:

- Other people
- Things (inanimate objects)
- God
- Ourselves

Forgiving Other People and Things

People are capable of sinning, so praying to forgive them makes sense to us. Even though “things” are not actually capable of sinning, I find it easy to recognize that I do frequently accuse them of doing so. Consequently it doesn’t seem particularly strange for me to forgive my computer for being too slow, or my car for not starting.

On a later page, I have listed several sample prayers for accomplishing this type of forgiving.

Forgiving God

God is incapable of sinning. Intuitively we know this, so to say to God “I forgive You” somehow feels not genuine. At the same time, we have in fact sinned by judging Him; and to remove that sin, we need to forgive so we can be forgiven. We also need to restore the relationship.

Using different words that parallel the meaning of “forgive” should remove this awkwardness. For example:

“God, I wrongly judged You as _____ (name the judgment) _____. My God wannabe (“flesh”) lied to me about You. I release You from the debt I charged against You. I know that You did not _____ (name the judgment) _____. Lord, I ask that You release me from the debt that I owe for having taken Your place as the judge of You. I ask You to take out the bitter root, and wash me clean with Your blood. Please come into that place, filling that place in me with Your Holy Spirit.”

Lord, I am so sorry that I judged You. Please forgive me.”

Forgiving Yourself

Judging ourselves is very common, and very destructive to us. Forgiving ourselves is more complex than forgiving God, because our “flesh” (God-wannabe, Chapter 13) is capable of sinning; and yet our Treasure Inside (Chapters 9 and 12) is made in God’s image, and therefore does not sin. Whenever we judge ourselves, we always condemn both. Therefore, not only is this judging sin, it is an affront to our Treasure Inside.

Here we bump into the same awkwardness as when we forgive God. To say to our Treasure Inside “I forgive you” somehow feels not genuine. Intuitively we know he or she did not sin.

As with forgiving God, using different words that parallel the meaning of “forgive” should remove this awkwardness. And of course, we want to restore our relationship with our Treasure Inside. For example, focus inside and speak to your Treasure Inside:

“_____ (your name) _____, I wrongly judged you as being _____ (the judgment) _____. My God wannabe lied to me about you. I release you from the debt I charged against you. I know that you are not _____ (the judgment) _____. I am so sorry that I judged you. Lord, I ask that You release me from the debt that I owe for having taken Your place as the judge of myself. I ask You to take out the bitter root, and wash me clean with Your blood. Please come into that place, filling it with Your Holy Spirit.”

_____ (your name) _____, please forgive me. I want to be your friend, not your judge.”

Sample Prayers for Forgiving Others and Things

Note that in each case I would speak directly to the other person/thing, using the second person "you," as though he/she/it was present. This makes it more personal, and brings the event back to my mind. Generally I will not actually go the one I judged and speak these words to them. The problem isn't in them, it is inside me.

Alternate #1

A prayer regarding your Dad might go something like this:

"Father God, I come to You in the blessed name of Jesus.
I realize that I have judged my Dad, and I have inside me a root of bitterness.
I am sorry that I did this, and I don't want that awful thing in me anymore.
Dad, I forgive you for _____ (the offense).
Lord, I ask You to forgive me for this judgment of bitterness.
Forgive me for taking Your place as the judge.
I ask You to come into that place in me, remove that ugly thing from me and wash me clean with Your blood. Cleanse me in every place where that bitterness existed.
I ask You to fill all those places with Your presence.
Lord, I ask that You would bless my Dad. Amen."

Alternate #2

A prayer regarding Mom might go something like this:

"Mom, I forgive you for _____. You owe me nothing – no restitution, no apologies, no explanation, no reasons, no excuses. I release you totally. I accept Jesus, as the restitution for your sin against me.
Father, Your Word says, that If we confess our sins, we can trust you to be merciful and just and forgive us of all unrighteousness. I have now confessed my sin, and know that You have forgiven me. As far as the east is from the west, you have put my sin from me and You remember it no more."

Alternate #3

For example, a man cuts me off in traffic. I feel anger spring up in me. I honk my horn and utter some words. Then I would catch myself and say something like:

"Lord, I have just judged that man." I would name the feeling behind the anger, in this case perhaps "demeaned", or "belittled."
"Mister, I forgive you for pulling out in front of me, for treating me as being of less importance than you, for ignoring my safety.
Lord, forgive me for judging that man, for taking Your place on the throne as the judge.
I ask You to reach down inside me and remove that bitter root I just planted.
Wash that place clean with Your blood, and then please fill that place with Your Holy Spirit.
Lord, bless that man's day, and keep him safe.
I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen."

Alternate #4

This is an example based upon the Elements Involved in Forgiving on Page 69.

Example: I discover that my wife (Kay) has failed to do the laundry (we have agreed on who does which home chores, and this is one of hers), and I have no clean socks. I am angry at her, and say to myself: "There, she did it again!"

I have just planted a root of bitterness in myself, and I need the Lord to remove it.

Recognition: "I have just judged Kay for not having done the laundry."

Confession: "I sinned when I judged her."

Repentance: "I am unhappy that I did this, and want that bitter root taken out."

Forgiveness: "Kay, I forgive you for not doing the laundry, and leaving me without any clean socks."

Accept Forgiveness: "Lord, forgive me for judging Kay. Take out that bitter root I just planted. Cleanse that place with your blood."

Ask the Lord to Fill me: "Lord, I invite you to come into that place where the bitter root had been; and fill it with your Spirit."

Bless the other: "Lord, I ask that you would bless her in her busy schedule."

Restoring the relationship (Restitution): In this example, my wife was not present when I discovered that I had no clean socks. If she had been present, and if I had spoken those angry words to her or otherwise acted angrily towards her, I would then need to restore our relationship. I would confess my sin against her, tell her how sorry I am that I hurt her, and ask her to forgive me for judging her, and wounding her.