

## Forgiveness Is A Choice

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The story goes that a man went golfing one morning and promised his wife that he would be home by noon. When he didn't get home till four in the afternoon, his wife was furious. *"Forgive me for being late,"* he pleaded. *"When we were on the twelfth tee, my friend Roger was struck unconscious by a wayward ball."*

*"Oh, that's terrible,"* said his wife. *"No wonder you're late."*

*"Yes,"* he replied. *"For the rest of the day it was hit the ball, drag Roger; hit the ball, drag Roger; hit the ball..."*

The problem that too many people have is that they are trying to play the game of life while still dragging their past hurts behind them. Instead of letting go of problems, resentments, disappointments, and failures, they drag them around as cherished scars, as rallying points for others' pity, as excuses for escaping present responsibilities.

The Bible teaches that what has transpired in our lives is not to be what controls our lives. St. Paul said, *"Forgetting what is behind, I press on..."* Jesus taught that we are to forgive everyone, even if they don't ask for forgiveness.

If you refuse to forgive another, you become that person's slave. He or she may not even know about your bitter feelings, but they gnaw at you until you cannot enjoy life. Resentments cause stress hormonal changes that cause you to tire after only a few hours of work. The person you have not forgiven is always on your thoughts. He or she hounds you wherever you go. Even food may lose its appeal.

An unforgiving spirit often leads to anger – anger that the other person could be so irresponsible, so uncaring. Ultimately, depression and hopelessness may set in. Why? Because all that bitterness and resentment has not been able to change the guilty person one little bit. Life seems completely uncontrollable.

Often, the person you have refused to forgive isn't even aware of your pain. Holding grudges doesn't make the other person miserable. Instead, it makes you miserable.

But life is far from out of control. While you may not be able to control the one who wronged you, you can control your own attitude. And that is what really matters. Changing the other person's attitude can never cause us to be happy. Happiness is something we must choose for ourselves.

The Bible says to forgive others no matter how many times they may offend us. While we think we are doing them a favor, we are actually doing ourselves the bigger favor.

Forgiveness, letting go of the pains of the past, is a choice that we make. We can find excuses for our mistakes and failures, we can blame others and circumstances for our disappointments, we can dislike ourselves for things we have done, or we can release these things to Jesus and choose to forgive as God has forgiven us.

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