



ABBA Ministries

501 N. Dale Ave. McHenry, IL 60050 (815)347-3928

Illuminating Life through Scripture

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is choosing to endure the pain caused by someone else without requiring them to suffer on our behalf for what they have done to us. It is one of three options we have when someone has wronged us in any significant kind of way. We cannot demand forgiveness for ourselves, nor can others demand it of us. Forgiveness can only be offered by the one who has endured the wrong.

Sometimes we would like to seek revenge on those who have hurt us. Somehow, we become convinced that hurting the person who hurt us will in some way diminish our pain. But such bitterness only helps us ignore the pain for a short time. Revenge temporarily distracts us from our pain but does nothing to actually alleviate the pain. Instead of helping, hurting someone back ends up causing us deeper pain by adding guilt to the pain we already feel.

A second common response which prevents us from forgiving others is to wallow in self-pity. Self-pity allows us to blame others for what we rightfully suspect is our own fault. Self-pity goes beyond the actual hurt inflicted by another and serves as an excuse for our own irresponsibility. Like bitterness or revenge, self-pity actually intensifies our pain rather than limiting or ending it.

Forgiveness means we must first accept that we have been wronged and there is nothing we can do to change that fact. This means that our lives will somehow be more difficult for us than they would have otherwise been without the offense. We will not seek to justify, understand, or explain away the fact that our lives have been changed by the cruel actions of another person.

Second, we must accept that time alone will not heal our wounds. "Forgive and forget" is common advice, but the emphasis is usually on the "forget". No one likes to be confronted with the fact that they have caused someone else harm. No one likes confronting another with the fact that they have been harmed. Yet such confrontation is usually necessary for true healing to take place and for relationships to be restored. Even if the other person does not respond well to our confrontation, at least we have the satisfaction that we have done all we can to end the pain they have caused us.

Third, we accept the fact that even though our lives are more difficult because of what has been done to us, we can still salvage and enjoy whatever is left. Living with bitterness or self-pity only surrenders whatever fulfillment we could still have. We accept the reality that life will not be all we wanted it to be, but we still have the possibility, and perhaps even the responsibility, to live life to the fullest possible extent despite the harm others have caused us.

Forgiveness is necessary when you want to live life honestly, acknowledging the ways others have harmed you, but also looking forward to making the most possible out of life.