

**The necessity of forgiveness*****We need God to forgive us.***

“Forgiveness is man’s greatest need. Without it he is doomed to spend eternity in hell suffering for his sins. With it, he will spend eternity in heaven with God enjoying the eternal fruits of Christ’s righteousness” (Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 6).

“But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops. I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:2–5).

“God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts” (Psalm 7:11–13; cf. 5:5).

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one [point], he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10).

“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared” (Psalm 130:3–4).

***We need to forgive one another.***

We sin and are sinned against.

“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, “I repent,” forgive him” (Luke 17:3–4).

“Forgiveness is the oil that keeps the machinery of the Christian home and church running smoothly. In a world where even those who have been declared perfect in Christ sin, there is much to forgive. Christians who must work together closely find themselves denting each others’ fenders, now and then taking out a taillight or two, and at times even having head-on collisions. Under such conditions, forgiveness is what keeps things from breaking down completely” (Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, 7).

**The basis of forgiveness: from forgiven to forgiving**

We have been forgiven of a tremendous debt, therefore we ought to forgive others.

The key to unlocking the meaning of forgiveness is understanding the way God has forgiven us.

“He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

“...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other ...; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” (Colossians 3:13)

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Matthew 6:14–15).

## The nature of forgiveness: a declarative promise

Forgiveness is not	Forgiveness is
a feeling	a declaration, an act of the will
based on forgetting (passive)	choosing not to remember against (active)
excusing sin	dealing honestly with sin

***Forgiveness is a promise to remember not.*<sup>1</sup>**

“I will not dwell on this incident.”	“Good thought”
“I will not mention this incident to you again to use it against you.”	“Hurt you not”
“I will not talk to others about this incident.”	“Gossip never”
“I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”	“Friends forever”

## Practicing Forgiveness

**Persons I have wronged  
from whom I have not  
sought forgiveness**

**Persons whom I have not  
approached over wrongs  
that have separated us**

**Persons I refused to forgive**

1. Columns One and Two: Make sure that these are real issues that have hindered your relationship.
2. Prioritize your list and contact each person listed, beginning with those you *least* want to address.
3. Set an appointment with each person to talk, preferably at a neutral place such as a restaurant. Don't get into a discussion of the matter over the phone. Say, “It's too important to discuss over the phone.”
4. Keep your appointment and be ready to do whatever God requires of you.
5. Seek reconciliation. If forgiveness is not granted, be diligent to do your part. If, after repeated attempts, your efforts are rebuffed, take one or two others with you on your next contact (cf. Matthew 18:15–17).
6. In the future, as much as it depends upon you, keep short accounts and deal with sin quickly.

<sup>1</sup> Sande, *The Peacemaker*, 189–190.