



TEACH FORGIVENESS

7 truths that foster an attitude of forgiveness

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JESUS SAID THAT IF A BROTHER SINS AGAINST YOU seven times a day and each time says, “I am sorry,” you are to forgive him (see Luke 17:3-4). Jesus was speaking to adults, but the advice applies equally well to children. Forgiveness is an ideal that Christian parents try to instill in their families. Use these seven truths to cultivate forgiveness within your family.

1. Hurts come from various sources. We easily feel left out, betrayed, cheated, overlooked, wrongly accused, ignored, put down, embarrassed, ridiculed, disrespected, used, or bullied.

2. Egos are fragile; slights fuel anger, defensiveness, standoffs, shut-downs, shutouts, and retaliation.

3. Forgiveness requires “forgetfulness,” a willingness to let go of the hurt and start anew. Releasing the hurt from memories is the essence of forgiveness and necessary for personal peace.

4. Forgiveness is, first, a gift that we give to ourselves. It is also a gift that we offer to the offender — who may or may not accept it. Offering forgiveness releases us from the paralyzing effects of an unforgiving spirit.

5. When we hold on to a hurt, we let that event or person continue to hurt us. An unforgiving spirit makes our own hearts hard and spreads into a general distrust of others. When we hold on to anger or hurt, we stop smiling and laughing. We cease to see the world around us with optimism. We isolate ourselves. We cannot recognize blessings because we exist within an inner world of “I’ll show you” or “I’ll get even with you” or “I’ll punish

you; I’ll make you pay!” or “You’ll be sorry!”

6. An unforgiving spirit continues to hurt us. We become bitter, and meaningful life stops for us. Meanwhile, the offending person may be totally unaware of hurting us — or worse, he or she may be totally unconcerned about causing hurt. That person continues to be just fine while we are destroying ourselves — emotionally, psychologically, and even physically. Anger affects health.

7. Forgiveness is a proactive choice. It is a freedom we give to ourselves to continue to live and love. As a result, we continue to grow happy, healthy, and more whole. We admit that someone has offended us. We do not condone the wrong. But rather than keeping the hurt alive by ruminating over it, we make a decision to grow beyond the offense and release the negative emotions associated with the person or event. **T**

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