

FORGIVENESS GUIDE

PANTANO CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Relationships.

As we've seen in this series, there is so much to love and be thankful for when it comes to our relationships. So much joy and life are connected to our relationships, whether that is with our kids, family, friends, spouse, parents, or co-workers.

However, the reality is some relationships are hard. There are people in our lives that have hurt, abused, harmed, or taken advantage of us. While there are joy and happiness connected to relationships, there is also sadness, missed opportunities, regret and sometimes, shame.

Yet, Jesus is clear that we are to love those who are difficult or even seem impossible to love (Luke 6:27-33). Loving those who are difficult often requires that we forgive them for the wrong done to us. As Pastor Glen said on Sunday, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks love."

But what is forgiveness and how do you and I practice it?

Do I have to forgive everyone? What if they don't apologize? What if I really struggle with it?

A mentor once told me, "Josh, you need to let that person go so they stop taking up real estate in your heart." That is easier said than done.

Our next step following Sunday's message is to help you forgive so that you are able to experience the full relational life that Jesus has for you.

**Before getting to forgiveness,
let's quickly recap the things that don't
define forgiveness.**

In his book, *Rumors of God*, Jon Tyson said there are six myths about forgiveness:

1. Forgiving is the same as forgetting.
2. Forgiving is the same as reconciling.
3. Forgiving is the same as excusing.
4. Forgiving will make you weak.
5. Forgiving is a simple act or decision.
6. Forgiving depends on the perpetrator admitting wrong.

These are important as we think about forgiveness. Often, we say “forgive and forget.” But we always remember. We carry that memory of those words that were spoken, that thing that was done. Forgiveness will involve facing the pain you carry.

As Christians, we often carry the idea that forgiveness is the same as reconciling. But you can forgive someone and not have them in your life. What I mean is that sometimes it is wise to have a boundary with a person who has hurt you, especially if there is any kind of abuse involved.

Forgiveness is not weakness or excusing wrong behavior. Giving forgiveness means bearing the other person's sin. There is a cost to forgiveness. You must bear their sin. This cost of forgiveness is always on the person granting forgiveness. This is why forgiveness is so hard. C.S. Lewis said, "Forgiveness is a beautiful word until you have something to forgive." You can forgive someone who has not apologized or asked for your forgiveness.

Forgiveness is letting go, canceling what is owed to you, letting go of the control the offender has over you. It is giving up revenge, and as we see in Romans 12:19, it is leaving it in God's hands.

And lastly, this is important and what we looked at on Sunday: Forgiveness is possible because Jesus bore your sin and the cost of your forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32). When we look at the cross, we see how Jesus bore our sin, knowing we would fail again and again. Yet, he forgave us. The power of this moment is what enables us to forgive the way Jesus did.

With that in mind, use this guide as a way to let go and move forward in freedom. Apply this to your relationships that need the power of grace and forgiveness.

DAY 1

- Read 1 John 1:9.
- Do you believe that God will forgive you and purify you? If not, why not? Why is that a struggle for you?
- Take a moment to confess anything that comes to mind.
- One of the most important steps of forgiving someone else is embracing the forgiveness of God. Why is that so important? How is that connected to giving forgiveness?

Prayer

Lord, I bring to you my hurt, pain, and shame connected to relationships. Help me to experience your forgiveness with _____. I confess to you _____. Help me to know that you have forgiven me and purified me and that I am set free. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 2

- Read Matthew 6:12, 14-15.
- Look at the statements below. These are common ideas about forgiveness, compiled by Pastor Rick Warren. Do you think these are true or false?
 - People should not be forgiven until they ask for it.
 - Forgiveness includes minimizing the offense and the pain that was caused.
 - Forgiveness includes restoring trust and reuniting a relationship.
 - You haven't really forgiven until you've forgotten the offense.
 - When I see someone else hurt, then it is my duty to forgive the offender.
- All of these statements are false. How do you feel about that?
- Why does Jesus connect our forgiveness of others to God's forgiveness?

Prayer

Lord, help me to forgive so that I can experience your forgiveness and freedom. Help me to know that you care for me and what I carry and that you forgive me. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 3

- Read Ephesians 4:31-32.
- Do you carry any bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, or slander towards anyone?
Towards a situation?
- Take a moment to confess that to Jesus (remember day 1).
- Think of the person you need to forgive. What would it mean to forgive them as you have been forgiven in Jesus?
- Ask God to help you let go and forgive as you have been forgiven.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for forgiving me. I confess to you _____. Help me to have the courage to forgive _____ for _____. I want to experience the life and freedom that you have for me. Thank you again for your forgiveness in my life. Help me to experience that anew today. In Jesus' name, amen.

