

# A choice we make through a decision of our will

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We cannot let the world's wounds destroy our spirits. We cannot let our hurts and betrayals destroy our capacity for growth and caring. That there will be Judgment and, perhaps, Justice, is necessary. That the violence be confronted and, if possible, contained is essential. But, most important is our capacity to nurture a loving heart, to affirm and not to curse, to forgive even when we cannot completely forget. " - Glenn H. Turner

Some Questions to ask: How do you respond when you are wounded? How do you feel toward the person who has hurt you?

How long do you carry your anger and how does that re-resentment (feeling it again and again) continue to hurt you? Can you forgive and break the cycle? Can you understand the other? What does forgiveness mean to you? It is not uncommon for Christians to have questions about forgiveness. Forgiveness does not come easy for most of us. Our natural instinct is to recoil in self-protection when we've been injured. We don't naturally overflow with mercy, grace and forgiveness when we've been wronged. Is forgiveness a conscious choice, a physical act involving the will, or is it a feeling, an emotional state of being?

The Bible offers insight and answers to these and many more questions about forgiveness. We'll take a look at the most frequently asked questions and find out what the Bible says about forgiveness. Is forgiveness a conscious choice, or an emotional state? I believe forgiveness is a choice we make through a decision of our will, motivated by obedience to God and his command to forgive. The Bible instructs us to forgive as the Lord forgave us: Colossians 3: 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.

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Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (NIV) How do we forgive when we don't feel like it? How do we translate the decision to forgive into a change of heart? We forgive by faith, out of obedience. Since forgiveness goes against our nature, we must forgive by faith, whether we feel like it or not. We must trust God to do the work in us that needs to be done so that the forgiveness will be complete. I believe God honors our commitment to obey Him and our desire to please him when we choose to forgive. He completes the work in his time.

We must continue to forgive (our Job), by faith, until the work of forgiveness (the Lord's Job), is done in our hearts. Philippians 1: 6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (NLT) How will we know if we have truly forgiven? Lewis B. Smedes wrote in his book, *Forgive and Forget*, " When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself. " More Forgiveness Quotes that comes as a result. We are the ones who suffer most when we choose not to forgive. When we do forgive, the Lord sets our hearts free from the anger, bitterness, resentment and hurt that previously imprisoned us. Most times, however, forgiveness is a slow process. Matthew 18: 21-22 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, " Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? " Jesus answered, " I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (NIV) This answer by Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is not easy for us.

It's not a one-time choice and then we automatically live in a state of forgiveness. Forgiveness may require a lifetime of forgiving, but it is important to the Lord. We must continue forgiving until the matter is settled in our heart. Is it okay to feel anger and want Justice for the person we need to forgive? This question presents another reason to pray for the person we need to forgive. We can pray for God to deal with the injustices, for God to Judge the person's life, and then we can leave that prayer at the altar. We no longer have to carry the anger.

Although it is normal for us to feel anger toward sin and injustice, it is not our Job to judge the other person in their sin. Luke 6: 37 Do not Judge, and you will not be Judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (NIV) Why must we forgive? The best reason to forgive is because Jesus commanded us to forgive. We learn from Scripture, if we don't forgive, neither will we be forgiven: Matthew 6: 14-16 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (NIV) We also forgive so that our prayers will not be hindered: Mark 11: 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (NIV) In summary and in closing, we forgive out of obedience to the Lord. It is a choice, a decision we make. However, as we do this "forgiving," we discover the command is in place for our own good, and we receive the reward of our forgiveness" freedom.