

*Forgiveness (3)*  
*Forgiving Others*  
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**Introduction:** How do I know if I am really living the Christian life?

- A. Often we mistakenly check first on the externals. (**Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13**)
  - 1. While the externals have a place in identifying the condition of our hearts, we must always look at our hearts first! (**Mt 23:25-26**)
  - 2. Why do we often fail here? Because it is easier to use externals as a mask.
  - 3. Please do not find comfort with the position that denies a place for externals! (**Mt 23:23**)
- B. I cannot think of any greater tests of our heart than the one of forgiving others.
  - 1. I ask that you listen with absolute honesty.
  - 2. If we do not see our need here, we will in time become like the Pharisees.

***I. What is forgiveness?***

- A. We know it is like love in that it comes from the character of God. (**1 Jn 4:19; Mt 6:12,14-15**)
  - 1. When we define forgiveness as God does then we will know!
  - 2. Do you know the forgiveness of God?
- B. What is God's forgiveness like?
  - 1. God blots out our sins! (**Acts 3:19**)
  - 2. God does not remember our sins any more. (**Heb 8:12**)
  - 3. God receives us back to a full fellowship. (**Lk 15:20-24**)

***II. Genuine forgiveness is truly difficult***

- A. In real forgiveness you take the loss or hurt and write it off.
  - 1. We are a people who do not want to be cheated! It is with the utmost difficulty that we let go of a real debt!
  - 2. Before you try to justify your holy war over your hurts ask this question: "What if God treated my debt to Him as I am treating others?" (**Mt 18:23-35**)
  - 3. Notice the great emphasis of the scriptures here. (**Mt 6:14-15, 18:35**)
- B. Humility is a must for one to truly forgive. (**Col 3:12-13**)
  - 1. A proud person will pursue the one who injured him for as long as it takes!
  - 2. In humility we recognize who we really are. Let go!
- C. Self-deception is very strong when it comes to forgiveness. (**Jas 1:26**)
  - 1. We can say we "forgive" while at the same time harbor bitterness in our hearts.
  - 2. Even though we say the right words, it is plain to others that we have a vendetta.
- D. Things which men substitute for forgiveness.
  - 1. **To ignore both the wrong done and the person who did it.**
    - a. If we can by love cover a fault then all is well. (**1 Pt 4:8**)
    - b. But if we bury a hurt and then snub and avoid another, we are in trouble.
  - 2. **To go by the "eye for an eye" approach.** After I get even then all is well!
  - 3. **To put the person on probation.**
    - a. I will forgive you but if you do this again...be extra good or else!
    - b. We may think we have forgiven but in truth we have not! What is

forgiveness? (**Heb 8:12**)

### ***III. The hard road of the unforgiving heart.***

- A. The unforgiving lives a life of pain.
  - 1. They think if they forgive that they will be cheated. In truth they have taken a road far harder than anything God would put us through. (**Deut 6:24**)
  - 2. Over time the unforgiving heart becomes a hardened heart. (**Eph 4:19,32**)
  - 3. When the desire for revenge pushes out the love of God it will be replaced with bitterness and anger. They are relentless masters.
  - 4. In time you will act like a crazy person! You may know the right words to speak and wear your mask often, but your heart will be revealed! Consider the examples of the Pharisees. (**Mk 15:10; Jn 18:28**)
- B. The family of the unforgiving pays a high price.
  - 1. In the family of the unforgiving you must line up or be punished. You are not allowed to point out the obvious.
  - 2. To have association with the unforgiving you must shun who they shun, participate in the "critical talk" they talk or be cut off.
  - 3. This taught bitterness and unreasonableness is common in those who are alcoholics and other kinds of addicts.
  - 4. It is better for a young Christian in such a home to seek to separate from that influence as soon as possible.
- C. The church of one who is unforgiving also pays a price. (**Heb 12:14-15**)
  - 1. Most church problems have their origins here.
  - 2. Forgiving people pursue peace. Unforgiving people pursue allies.
- D. The unforgiving and their allies will go to hell. (**Mt 18:35; Jas 2:13**)
  - 1. It is not enough to say: "I have been bitter." You need to make it right!
  - 2. King Saul occasionally admitted his wrong but never repented. (**1 Sam 24:17-19**)
  - 3. I believe that the driving force behind liberalism are those who have not dealt with their hurts and therefore want "no more conflict." Here they want to run and hide!

### ***IV. The healing power of genuine forgiveness***

- A. Forgiveness releases us from unnecessary burdens! (**Mt 11:28-30**)
- B. Forgiveness restores relationships! (**Col 3:12-13**)
- C. Forgiveness lets us partake of the character of God! (**2 Pt 1:4**)

***Conclusion:*** Do you know the joy and power of God's forgiveness?

- A. A Test to determine if we have forgiven
  - 1. Do we get pleasure in their hurt?
  - 2. Do we intentionally avoid being in their presence?
  - 3. Do we vividly remember what we have suffered?
  - 4. Are we uncomfortable when they are praised?
  - 5. Do we go out of the way to be helpful to that person?
  - 6. Are we willing to pray for the person. (**Mt 5:43-45**)
- B. Is this hard? Yes! But it is God's will and we can do it!