

Definition of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is to release a person who has harmed you from a moral debt that they owe to you. And at a greater level, it is to even will the good for the perpetrator – to actively bless the one who has harmed you. (Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has this idea everywhere in it – willing the good even for those who have harmed you.) And all this can happen with or without their apology or paying restitution to you. And it can happen without even restoring the relationship to its old privileges.

Steps for Forgive

- 1) recognize that the offender's action was wrong (don't blameshift to mere circumstance)
- 2) assess the harm it did to you, including your feelings: put this into words (for your eyes only)
- 3) if possible, recognize your own level of responsibility (perhaps: how you made it easier for them to do harm to you)
- 4) recognize your just right to compensation (even if that compensation is just an apology; it's a myth is that there's no debt at all)
- 5) remember how much YOU'VE been forgiven by God, and that the ratio of what you've been forgiven to what you are going to forgive. You been forgiven zillions, and God's only asking you to forgive hundreds.
- 5) seek reconciliation (if you so choose or are able) with offender with this formula "When you did X, it make me feel Y and cost me Z."
- 6) Ask for an apology or other restitution, if you'd like. (see step 4)
- 7) Acknowledge and repent of your own role, if applicable: ("I also recognize and apologize for my role and ask you for your forgiveness. I promise to change in these ways.")
- 8) If they apologize, tell them you forgive them. (If you can't eek out those words truthfully, tell them you'll work on forgiving them!)
- 9) Even if they don't apologize, forgive them before God with the private prayer, "Lord, I forgive them just as you have forgiven me, and bless them" (see Lord's Prayer). Forgiveness is a decision before it is a feeling, though we certainly to aim to forgive "in your heart" vs. 35. Also, bless them in your heart: Forgiveness, in the end, means to will the offender's good!