Moving Beyond the Past
Conquering Forgiveness
Part 3

This is our last part on moving beyond the past, if you haven’t watched parts 1 and 2 from last month, please watch those first, as they are important to do before you get to this action step.

**Key Point # 1: Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling.**

Read Matthew 18:21,22, Ephesians 4:26,27,31,32. Why do you think God tells us to forgive?

Why is it important that you do the other steps of telling yourself the truth, feeling your feelings, and sorting through who is responsible for what before forgiving?

**Key Point # 2: Forgiveness does not excuse the offender or minimize his or her offense towards you. Forgiveness is your decision to cancel the debt another person rightfully owes you.**

Read Genesis 42-46. Forgiveness does not require reconciliation. It releasing the debt but it still may not restore the relationship.

Joseph’s forgiveness and his brothers’ repentance were both necessary to bring reconciliation and restoration to their relationship.

After forgiveness then you can decide whether to release or reconcile the relationship.

**Key Point # 3: Once you choose to forgive, here are the steps on how to do it.**
1. Exercise your will. Choosing not feeling is an important first step. If you haven’t told yourself the truth about what happened, experienced and expressed your emotions, let go of responsibility for things that you are not responsible for and taken responsibility for what you are responsible for, true forgiveness is difficult because you still have a lot of unresolved turmoil and confusion inside.

2. Let go of the negative emotions when they resurface. You have already processed your anger and other emotions in the earlier steps, but now is the time to release your anger, hurt and your desire to get even or have the debt paid back to you. Cancel the debt and instead appeal to God for justice and turn it over to him.

3. Ask God for a new set of eyes. Ask him to help you “see” your offender differently as well as to help you see yourself differently. You are not just the “victim” but you are also a sinner who sometimes hurts other people too. Perhaps not in the same way but you are still guilty. The perpetrator is not just a bad person. He or she is also a human being with his or her own hurts, back story and baggage. Shifting your focus is crucial because when God shows us our own sinful nature and the things we are capable of doing (or have done), then we have more genuine compassion on our offender because but for God’s grace, we may have done the same thing.

   Read Matthew 18:27-33; Luke 7:36-50. What are Jesus’ words about how seeing ourselves differently helps in the process of forgiveness.

   We begin to no longer just see our offender only as someone who did something wrong, but also as someone who has done some things right. We no longer want to see him or her as a victimizer, but as a person with weaknesses of character and a sinful heart, just like me.

4. Repeat. When hurtful memories surface or we are tempted to dwell on the wrongs done to us, we continue this process and keep at it until the negative emotions and thoughts are no longer in the front of our mind or heart.

   They are fading and moving to the past, right where they belong.

   To practice forgiveness, walk regularly through these four steps: Decide—Begin—Continue—Keep at it.

   As we do this, we are changing. We are no longer defining ourselves by what has happened to us, but we are instead seeing ourselves by what God is doing in us.

   **Key Point # 4:** Choosing to obey God and granting forgiveness is something we do from the heart (because we want to please God) even if our emotions are reluctant. Choosing to
release the past and forgive, even when our emotions are reluctant isn’t hypocrisy; it’s obedience.

**Homework**

Pick one event from your past that you have not let go of. Perhaps it is a childhood wound or rejection. Maybe it is something someone has done that hurt you more recently. It might even be something you have done to yourself. If you’re reluctant, ask God to help you have the courage to get started.

Choose the first thing that you’d like to release and begin by naming it. Work through the five steps I’ve given in this series of videos, writing down as you go all your thoughts and feelings about it.

1. Acknowledge the truth of what happened.
2. Allow yourself to feel your feelings.
3. Release the things you are not responsible for.
4. Take responsibility for what you can change.
5. Choose to forgive

Invite God to help you change your perspective on your past and, like Joseph did, to help you see it through an eternal lens. When you struggle, confess your doubts and pray for more faith to believe God and what he tells you instead of your own thoughts and feelings.

Seek to learn how to respond to hurts and wrongs with truth and grace, so that you will know how to not be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. When you’re reluctant to let go and forgive, ask God to give you the willingness to forgive, not because you have to, but because you want to please and obey him.

Repeat these steps with each painful past offense until you feel that your past is no longer ruling your present. Here is a sample prayer you may want to pray.

*Dear Jesus,*

*Help me to be free from the bondage of my past. I no longer want to live like a victim. I want to live like a daughter of the King. I no longer want to hide from the truth of what happened to me, but I don’t want to be embittered by it either. Teach me to see things from your perspective so that I am neither hindered by my sin or the sin of others against me. Set my heart free so that I may fully live in the present, glorify you, and find my life in you.*

*I see how important it is that I let go of these things. Help me take responsibility for what I need to do to make progress in this area. Help me forgive those that have hurt me. When I doubt, give me faith. When I’m unwilling, give me the desire to be made willing.*
How do you know you have moved beyond your past? A good marker is when you are no longer waiting for anything. You’re not waiting for an apology. You’re not waiting for anyone to fall on his or her face and ask for your forgiveness. You’re not waiting for your parents or former husband or anyone else who has hurt you to finally see the light and give you their love or approval.

You are free when you are looking more upward and outward instead of inward and backward. You are free when you are starting to love and are not shutting down your emotions or allowing your heart to be filled with anger and resentment.

You have moved on and are living and creating your present story with your past as your background, not your foreground.