

## Forgiveness "Pretest" - What Is Forgiveness All About?

(This page is optional.) Write down your thoughts about forgiveness. After the study is complete, review what you wrote and see if you would answer anything differently.

The focus of these questions is on *your* forgiveness of another person. Some of the questions could just as easily be asked about *God's* forgiveness of us (though the answers may sometimes be different).

**What is forgiveness?**

**Can a person be forgiven if he is unwilling to turn from his sins?**

**If we forgive someone, does that mean he doesn't have to pay the consequences of his sins?**

**Can you be saved, and yet be unwilling to forgive people who sin against you?**

**Does FORGIVENESS mean...**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. You always understand why the person did what he did.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. You have forgotten that the person sinned against you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. You choose to ignore his sins, or avoid dealing with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. You choose to tolerate his sins, because you see other things that are good in his life?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. You let him get away with his sins.

**Are there any other comments (or questions) about forgiveness that you would like to write down?**

**What do these words mean?**

(Match the words with the descriptions.)

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Repentance                 | a. Acknowledging our sins to those we have sinned against; it implies a willingness to make amends (restitution), to whatever extent possible. |
| _____ 2. Conversion                 | b. A change in our values and conduct.   |
| _____ 3. Confession of sin          | c. Accepting as true whatever Jesus says, and being willing to live by it.   |
| _____ 4. Trust/faith in Jesus       | d. Considering others and their needs to be more important than our own self, and allowing this fact to influence our actions.                 |
| _____ 5. Love                       | e. Not holding against others the sins they have committed against us.   |
| _____ 6. An attitude of forgiveness | f. A turning around; a change in our "direction": Abandoning our old way of life and embracing the way of Christ (the way of the cross).       |

## A "WORKSHEET" FOR SELF EVALUATION:

This "worksheet" is between you and God. It is *not* intended for you to share it with anyone else. Because of the nature of these questions, it may be best if you do *not* write down any of the answers on paper. (Or else destroy the paper afterwards.)

1. Name some of the people who have seriously wronged you. What did they do?
2. How did you respond at the time they wronged you? After answering this, evaluate your response with the following questions:
  - (1) Was it the way Jesus would have responded?
  - (2) Or was it the way the devil would have responded? (If it was this second type of response, then you have sinned against *them*. This is an additional issue that you may need to deal with, though it is not our present focus.)
3. Have you forgiven them? You will need to take into consideration what forgiveness is - which we have looked at in a previous part of this study. (Remember also that forgiveness doesn't mean a denial of what happened - pretending that the sin didn't occur, or that their actions didn't hurt.)

Before you go to the next question, you need to deal with any wrong attitude you may have toward them.
4. If you are willing to forgive them, is there anything you are going to have to do? If so, what? There may be things you have to do or say. Or if you have sinned against them (perhaps a wrong response to what they did), you may have to acknowledge your sin to them and ask *them* to forgive *you*.
  - (1) In some cases, they might be convinced that they were *not* wrong. But regardless of their response, make sure your own attitude and actions are right. Do not be the reason for any barrier between them and you!
  - (2) There may be times in which no action is possible (other than your own attitude changes), because you have lost contact with the person or he is dead.
5. After you have made any desired responses, compare: (1) The verses you examined in this study, and (2) Your response to those who sinned against you.

Evaluate what Scripture says about your response - your forgiveness (or lack of it), as well as anything else that may be a necessary part of your response. Based on these things, what does God say about *his* forgiveness of *you*?

# FORGIVENESS - Additional "Teacher's Notes" and Comments

[Note: These worksheets are intended to be used with the outline and other handouts about **forgiveness**.]

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## INTRODUCTION (Goes with PART 1)

### *"Forgiveness - What Is It?"*

The answer for all the YES/NO questions is "NO" - though in some instances the description may be a *part* of forgiveness.

It is not necessary to reach the "final" answers to all the questions *right now*. You may prefer to discuss the questions and leave them "open-ended," with the intention of looking for the answers during the series of lessons that follow.

**A comment about "forgetting" sins:** God, from the perspective of his sovereignty, *cannot* forget anything. He is *all-knowing*. But from the perspective of the way he interacts with us (on the human level), it is as though our sins never existed. Once forgiven, he will never bring up the issue again.

### *Conditions for forgiveness*

*For those who have been sinned against:* There must be a willingness to forgive, regardless of how the other person responds. God says we must be willing to forgive!

*For those who have committed the sin:* Before genuine forgiveness can be received, there must be: (1) a willingness to acknowledge the sin; (2) a willingness repent of it; and (3) an intention to *not* repeat the offense. Yet though these things are required, they do not *cause* the forgiveness! (Forgiveness must be *freely offered* by the one who is forgiving.)

Note that the *intention* to not repeat an offense is not a *guarantee* that it will never happen again. But the person doesn't want it to happen again, and will at least *try* to not do it again. He won't be *planning* to repeat the offense!

Forgiveness doesn't mean a denial of justice. Someone has to pay for the wrongs committed. For example, Jesus had to pay for the sins committed against God, in order for us to be forgiven.

# PART 1

## What can/cannot be forgiven?

"Blasphemy of the Spirit" is a frequently misunderstood concept. This is why I have included extended comments about it.

Hidden sins are serious enough that we need forgiveness for them! We must be ready to repent, any time we become aware of one.

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# PART 2

The examples found in Scripture are given to teach us how to live (or how *not* to live, if given as a *bad* example). They aren't merely "suggestions" that we can ignore, if we desire.

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# PART 3

**Our responsibility vs. God's role in salvation:** People tend to "polarize" to extremes, emphasizing the one and neglecting the other. *Both* are important; they are like parallel concepts. They are like boundaries that keep us from wandering off the "straight and narrow," into the realm of half-truths and error.

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## (PART 3) Concepts Related to Forgiveness

The "multiple choice" quiz is intended to be a help for learning the various concepts related to forgiveness. Some of the concepts may be easy to understand, but some tend to be misunderstood by most people. The answers to the questions:

1b, 2f, 3a, 4c, 5d, 6e

Note that some may be confused about the differences between *repentance* and *conversion*. Repentance focuses on the idea of "changing"; conversion focuses on "turning around."

Stress the fact that these requirements are not *optional*.

## PART 4 & Self-Evaluation Worksheet

The worksheet provides an opportunity for people to focus on *application* of what was learned in Part 4. If anything is written down on paper, encourage them to *not* leave the paper laying around. They may need to deal with some sin in their lives, but there is no need to *advertise* it, by leaving the paper where others can read it!

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## PART 5

**The concept of being BLESSED:** Blessedness is a condition of the heart that transcends circumstances. It is more than mere *happiness* or pleasant conditions. A look through Scripture will reveal that a righteous person is blessed, even when life gets rough.

**The idea of "forgiving oneself":** Sometimes people continue to "live in the past," when God has offered to give them a new beginning. There is *no legitimate reason* for a person to dwell on past sins, and to be unwilling to move past those things, in Christ.