

“Let ALL BITTERNESS, RESENTMENT, ANGER AND QUARRELING
be banished FROM YOU... AND BECOME *helpful* AND *kind* TO
ONE ANOTHER, *tenderhearted, forgiving one another*
AS GOD FORGIVES YOU.” - EPH 4:32

Dear Friend,

I am so excited you have chosen to take a step towards freedom through forgiveness. You can use this guide for three consecutive days, work through the material in one extended period of time, or take as much time as you need. Deeper wounds can take much longer to sort through and are worth a thorough exploration with a wise counselor or mentor; this worksheet is not a replacement for that, but a complement to the journey God already has you on. In your time alone with God, experience the power of forgiveness not by ignoring other's offenses, but by taking a good look at them, the impact they have had on your life, owning your responsibility, confessing, and obeying Christ's command to forgive. It is a practice you will benefit from on a daily basis, and the impact will last a lifetime.

Your Friend, Jen

Day 1:

1. The first day, we are going to look at the sin that has been committed against us. If someone has hurt you deeply, I want you to take this day to assess the affect their actions have had on you.
 - Exercise: focusing on one person in particular, make a list of the ways this person has hurt or offended you - be as specific as possible. (I'm aware this list may be very long. Just go for it. Don't stop until you feel you have fully listed their offenses against you.)

- Review your list. When you think of those events, what *impact* have those events had on you personally? *How have their actions made you feel? How have they affected your life?* Please write your answers down by making a list or journaling your responses to these questions. Again, be specific — we are looking not only at their sin against you, but at the *impact* their sin has had on you personally.
- Review what you have written and pray for God to help you forgive these debts as He has forgiven you, and for Him to take all your hurts and use them for the good.

Day 2:

2. The second day, we are going to look at our own part in the story. Even if you have been grieving (and still may grieve) the effect of your offender's sin against you, today we are going to take a look at your responsibility in the situation.
 - Exercise: even if you feel that this situation, event, or relational strain is all the other person's fault, take a gut-level, honest, face-to-face look at how you have contributed to the problem.
 - What is your responsibility in the situation? What did you do or have you done that has made the situation worse?
 - Take 100% stock of your own sin. Only look in the mirror — only at you — no one else. Take some time to list or write down your part in the story, as well as the *impact* your behavior has had on the situation. *How have you contributed to the problem?* Be honest with yourself here and honest with God. Try to see yourself and your actions from the other person's perspective. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your sin. Remember, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." (2 Cor 3:16-18)
 - Humble yourself before the Lord, and confess your sin to Him.
 - Find a trusted friend or mentor and confess your sin to that person. Although you may be tempted to, do not skip this step — the Bible teaches we are to "Confess our sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." (James 5:16). Remember that our entire purpose here is to heal you from the poison of un-forgiveness. Un-forgiveness only makes you bitter, and bitterness will continue to build up in resentment towards the person, who may be your brother or sister in Christ. Don't you want to purge yourself of the resentment? *Get rid of it.* If you do not, it will always be there, ready to unleash itself, often in the relationships that mean the most to you. So make a phone call, write a letter, or meet with a friend and confess your sin — not the sin of the other person — yours only — and pray together to be healed.

Day 3:

3. Today, we are going to do three essential things to clean your heart of un-forgiveness.
 - Pray. Get out your list of hurts before God. Review it and remember that Christ went to the cross for the person who hurt you too. Remember God's spirit is powerful enough to convict that person of their sin — that is not your job. Pray for that person to be healed and set free from their own sin.
 - Get out your list or journal that describes the *impact* their sin has had on your life. Review the list. Grieve the impact on your life — allow yourself to *feel it*. Tell God you do not want to hold onto these lists any longer, and ask him to help you let go.
 - Make a decision to forgive. If you do not “feel” like forgiving, realize that has nothing to do with it. Forgiveness is a command, not a suggestion. The benefit to forgiveness is that it releases *you — and you have come here to be released*. Un-forgiveness stops the flow of grace in your life. If you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you (Matt 6:14-15). Forgiveness is an act of obedience to a God who releases us of *ALL* our debt.
 - Suggested reading: Psalm 103:1-5, Matthew 18:24-35, and Ephesians 4:31.
 - Remember forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. Ask God to help you. Say out loud, “I forgive _____ for _____ and _____.” Go right on down your list. Read your list of offenses and list of impacts to God. Speak each offense and each impact out loud in prayer — offering forgiveness for each one.
 - Say out loud, “I know that I am a sinner, too, God, and because you forgive me of all my sin, I forgive _____ for his / her sins of _____, _____, and _____, and I bring him / her to the cross.”
 - Exercise: Now it's time to demolish your list. Choose how you want to do this. You can either take a red marker and cross off every single offense on your list and mark the paper “Paid in Full,” meaning that Christ has paid this person's debts against you in full, and you are not going to hold them against him or her anymore. Or, you may burn the list outside, in a safe place such as a dirt area, where you can let the ashes be buried in the earth. You may also shred, tear up, or wash away the papers as an illustration of the way God forgives you — “I blot out your transgressions for my names sake, and I will not remember your sins.” (Isa 43:25)
 - If God or the person you confessed your sin to suggested you go to that person and confess your fault, give that person a call. Apologize for your part. Refrain from bringing up their part. Share openly and humbly that you know what you did wrong in the situation and that you are sorry. Ask for forgiveness. No matter the outcome, know that the flow of grace has returned to your life.

- Whenever their sin tries to take up residence in your head, remind the devil you have forgiven as the Lord Jesus forgives you. This means you do not bring it up again, in conversation with anyone. It is over. Let it be in the past, and look for the new thing God is going to do in your life next!

When you are done with this exercise, if it is sincere, you will feel cleansed, and you will continue to practice this as offenses occur. You can practice it daily, using all three steps as your auto-pilot for everyday life and the offenses that arise in your relationships with people.

Decide never to become a bitter person. Bitterness and resentment will steal your joy, stain your beauty, and make you feel old. Daily forgiveness is obedience to a command that God gave us to forgive others as he forgave us. He does this so that we will be energized and free. As he says in Psalm 103, he blots out our iniquities so that our strength is renewed like the eagle's. Forgiveness actually makes us feel younger and stronger.

For deeper issues of bitterness, resentment, and anger in your life, see a Christian counselor who you feel comfortable with.

I am proud of you for making the decision to choose forgiveness in your life! Forgiveness is the essence of the gospel - the very reason Christ died for us. Let us allow His Spirit to cleanse and release us. In turn, we can release others. Love "keeps no record of wrongs" and "covers all offenses." (1 Corinthians 3:16, Proverbs 10:12). Let's make it our highest calling to forgive others as He has forgiven us, and love others as He has loved us!

Recommended Reading:

Total Forgiveness by R.T. Kendall

Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom by Nancy Leigh Demoss

The Beautiful Lies Study Guide by Jennifer Strickland

To find more Bible study resources to help you find your fulfillment, strength, and identity in Christ, go to www.urmore.org.