

FORGIVENESS

Principle 6: Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.

"Happy are the merciful." (Matthew 5:7) "Happy are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)

Step 8: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:31)

Step 9: We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23 – 24)

Think About It

Do you know the three kinds of forgiveness? To be completely free from your resentments, anger, fears, shame, and guilt, you need to give and accept forgiveness in all areas of your lives. If you do not, your recovery will be stalled and thus incomplete.

Have you accepted God's forgiveness?

Have you really accepted Jesus' work on the cross? By His death on the cross all your sins were canceled — *paid in full!* He exclaimed from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

"God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace they are all put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him." (Romans 3:22 – 25, GNT)

Have you forgiven others who have hurt you?

You must "let go" of the pain of the past harm and abuse caused by others. Until you are able to release it and forgive it, it will continue to hold you prisoner.

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:17 – 18)

You may owe God an amends! Remember that the harm that others did to you was from their free will, not God's will.

"After you have borne these sufferings a very little while, God himself (from whom we receive all grace and who has called you to share his eternal splendour through Christ) will make you whole and secure and strong." (1 Peter 5:10, PH)

NOTE: If you have been the victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or childhood emotional abuse or neglect I am truly sorry for the pain you have suffered. I hurt with you. But you will not find the peace and freedom from your perpetrator until you are able to forgive that person. Remember, forgiving him or her in no way excuses the harm done against you. Forgiveness will allow you, however, to be released from the power that the person has had over you. I have rewritten Principle 6 (Steps 8 and 9) for you.

Step 8: Make a list of all persons who have harmed us and become willing to seek God's help in forgiving our perpetrators, as well as forgiving ourselves. Realize we've also harmed others and become willing to make amends to them.

Step 9: Extend forgiveness to ourselves and to others who have perpetrated against us, realizing this is an attitude of the heart, not always confrontation. Make direct amends, asking forgiveness from those people we have harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Have you forgiven yourself?

You may feel that the guilt and shame of your past is just too much to forgive. This is what God wants you to do with the darkness of your past: "Come, let's talk this over! says the Lord; no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool! If you will only let me help you" (Isaiah 1:18 – 19, TLB).

Remember, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Write About It

1. As you look at the three kinds of forgiveness, which one of them was the easiest for you to accept? Why?

[Your Response Here]

2. Which area of forgiveness was the most difficult for you to accept? Why?

[Your Response Here]

3. What do the words of Christ found in John 19:30 ("It is finished.") mean to you?

[Your Response Here]

4. What hurt(s) from a past relationship are you still holding on to?

[Your Response Here]

5. How can you let go of the hurt(s)? Be specific.

[Your Response Here]

6. Do you owe God an amends? When will you give it?

[Your Response Here]

7. How have you been blaming God for the harmful actions that others took against you?

[Your Response Here]

8. Have you forgiven yourself? What past actions in your life do you still feel guilt and shame about? (List them, pray about them, and work on them in the next lesson.)

[Your Response Here]

PRINCIPLE 6A VERSES

"Treat others as you want them to treat you." (Luke 6:31, TLB)

*"Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."
(Colossians 3:13, TLB)*

"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." (Romans 2:1)

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (Luke 6:37)

". . . and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." (Matthew 6:12, TLB)

"So what should we say about this? If God is with us, no one can defeat us." (Romans 8:31, NCV)