

## WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: SECTION THREE

### Three Responses That Empower the Sufferer – Forgiveness/The Application

Forgiveness is indeed God's method for bringing about healing from the hurt that sinful human beings impose upon themselves and others. Responding with forgiveness to these hurts is a must if God's purpose for allowing such pain is to be accomplished. With our previous understanding of the distinction between covering and confronting forgiveness in mind, it is also important to be familiar with a practical working definition of forgiveness. In Isaiah 43:25, God tells us this –

**“I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”**

Based on this statement, forgiveness can be defined as “a promise to no longer hold an offense against someone; and to not bring up that offense to the offender, to yourself, or to others.” In other words, we let go of the offense and then, rather than promising to “forget” it, we promise to “not remember” it. The entire process takes place on the basis of our volition and not our emotion. Our demonstration of forgiveness remains intact, not because of selective amnesia, but due to a conscious refusal to think about the offense that has been forgiven. When we view forgiveness in this manner, it places the responsibility to forgive squarely where it belongs – upon the one who has been hurt. In making this promise, we release the anger within, which, if allowed to remain, can so easily poison our souls. Then, and only then, can healing from the hurt begin. In addition, following through on our promise is equally important. If we begin to relive the offense in our minds or in conversation with others, we have broken our promise. It is then incumbent on us to go to God and ask for forgiveness for having broken our promise to forgive! We then reaffirm the commitment to forgive, and through this process, over time, the offense becomes a permanent part of our past, as we undergo a thorough healing of the hurt.

Two practical principles can serve as motivation for any Christian who may be struggling with their responsibility to forgive. *Principle #1: We are never more grateful to God for our salvation, never more Christ-like in our daily behavior, than when we forgive someone who has hurt us.* The core of who we are as Christians is based on God's forgiveness of our sins. The most basic expression of that vertical reality, on an everyday horizontal level, takes place when we forgive others. Through such a demonstration of Christ-like love, our conformance to His image will deepen and grow, with the very real benefit of being healed from the hurt we have experienced.

This brings us to the negative corollary contained in *Principle #2: The Christian at his worst, is the one who having received forgiveness from God, refuses to forgive the one who has hurt him.* We should not be surprised that God takes this failure so seriously. No wonder He imposes a disciplinary process upon the unforgiving Christian, designed to produce a major attitude adjustment toward our responsibility to forgive (Matthew 18:34). That's not all. Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:26-27, as well as in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, about another downside to an unforgiving spirit. When we fail to process our anger properly by refusing to forgive, we become spiritually vulnerable to an adverse influence from Satan. Why? Instead of submitting to God and resisting the devil as we are told in James 4:7, we become guilty of the opposite by failing to forgive; thereby extending an open invitation to demonic influence and harassment.