

# I FORGIVE YOU

(Work through this alone in your heart.)

We are to forgive one another just as Christ has forgiven us... whether or not the other person apologizes or changes. Sometime we need to forgive others who are gone. Forgiving does not mean we have to extend trust or be close friends. It does mean that we deal with the attitudes in our own heart so that we can be free.

This is a supernatural act. Only those who are in Christ, and have Christ in them can truly forgive and be free. But in Christ we can and must forgive.

These words are best spoken aloud as you imagine facing the offender, or written in a letter that you will probably never send. It can take a few minutes, or it can take hours if you are working through some conflicts that are old or severe.

1. *"It hurt me when you \_\_\_\_\_.* (Be specific.)
2. *"And it made me feel \_\_\_\_\_.* (Be specific.)
3. *"Because the forgiving Christ lives in me and I in Him, I now choose to forgive you. I release you from the debt you owe me. As far as I am concerned, you never have to make it up to me or pay me back. You never have to admit what you've done to me or be sorry for it. As far as I am concerned, you are free.*
4. *"I give up the right to be the judge, jury, and prosecuting attorney in this matter. That is God's job. You are not responsible to me for meeting my standards of whether you were right or wrong in what you did. I now choose to let God be God and I acknowledge that you and your behavior are His responsibility.*
5. *"I accept you unconditionally, which means that my love and acceptance of you does not depend on you or your past performance. I choose to love and accept you just the way you are... even if you never change... even if you get worse.*
6. *"I release you from the responsibility to meet my needs for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.* I choose to trust Jesus alone as my total, complete and true source for meeting all my needs including my needs for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, & \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Jesus is everything I need for everything in my life.*
7. *"Since Jesus is my refuge, I can act out of love, not self-protection in our relationship. Therefore I am willing to risk being hurt again by you and trust Jesus alone as my wisdom about you and the nature of our relationship.*
8. *"God, I give up the right to have my feelings change according to my time schedule. Thank you that I don't have to look to my feelings as the indicator as to whether or not I have forgiven. Thank you that anger and fear no longer have to be what motivate me in this relationship.*

## WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?

(Use this to prepare to apologize.)

There are two kinds of apology. One is a subtle defense, expressing regret while justifying one's behavior: "I am sorry that *you were offended* by what I did." The second kind of apology is aimed at reconciliation. It is intended to renew the relationship. This is the kind of apology Jesus requires: If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go, and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

1. "***I admit I was wrong when I \_\_\_\_\_.***" (Be specific: "I ignored your needs, deceived you, spoke harshly, demanded so much...")

2. "***I apologize. I am sorry for \_\_\_\_\_.***" (Describe the seriousness of it from the point of view of God, and the other person: i.e. "What I did was... selfish, insensitive, careless..., and it must have made you feel... rejected, angry, afraid....")

3. "***I accept and understand why \_\_\_\_\_.***" (Accept and embrace the consequences of your choices, even if you don't like them.)

4. "***I ask you to forgive me.***" (i.e. "I'd like to put this behind me, but I need your forgiveness. I understand that you may need time to consider forgiving me. But I want you to know that I am asking you to forgive me.")

5. "***With God's help I will \_\_\_\_\_... (alter my choices.)*** (In some cases it may be necessary to demonstrate your change of heart by repaying damages, making up for a wrong done or committing yourself to some new course of action.)

Resist pointing out your partner's side. There may come a time when you will have the freedom to share your concerns, but this is not the time. First you must get the log out of your own eye before you can see clearly to get the speck out of your brother's eye. Otherwise your apology comes across as an insincere, manipulative tool.

Apologies are expressed differently in each culture. Some use "go between." Some require certain gestures or bowing. But in every culture you can assess the quality of an apology with these questions:

- Have I truly humbled myself?
- Have I clearly admitted where I was wrong?
- Does the other party feel that I care how I have hurt them?