

# THE OVERCOMING LIFE

## Overcoming Unforgiveness

**Focus** Whether it was intentional or not, we have all been offended at one time or another. Sometimes we go over the offense again and again in our heads. Yet, unforgiveness can open the door to oppression and deception from the devil. God created us to be conquerors. He wants us to learn how to overcome because victory is the birthright of every believer. When we are offended, we are not to seek revenge. Instead, our actions should be to glorify God and seek the good of all.

**Fun** What is your favorite outdoor activity this time of year?

**Review** Key Scriptures: Philippians 4:13; 1 John 5:4; Revelation 12:11

Offenses, hurts, unkind words, rejection, and betrayal come to us as part of life. Regardless of the source, we must forgive as God forgives us. Jesus has empowered us to overcome and has promised extravagant gifts for those who do.

### **1. There are three shocking truths about forgiveness.**

A. God takes the issue of forgiveness seriously. We can open the door to bondage and torture when we do not forgive (Ephesians 4:26–27). We are also affected physically, emotionally, and spiritually, which can lead to oppression and deception.

B. Unforgiveness is petty from God's perspective (Matthew 6:15). Forgiveness is conditional. Remember the story of the unforgiving servant. God cannot forgive or heal us when we are unforgiving.

C. God perceives the issue of forgiveness differently than we do. (Psalm 103:8–14).

## 2. Understanding the meaning of forgiveness.

A. Permanently forgiving all debt and bringing the balance to zero. Although the Master forgives, someone has to take the consequence. Jesus took the consequence and paid our debt.

B. Permanently forfeiting the right of reproach. Once I forgive, it should be over and not stirred up again.

C. Permanently forgoing all expressions of private and public judgment. God is the judge. I am not to talk about or label that person. *It does not mean* that I cannot protect myself (Matthew 10:16), that I cannot confront that person, that there will not be punishment or consequences, or that I cannot seek legal or police protection (Romans 13:1–5).

## 3. How to forgive from the heart.

A. We must remember that our sins cost Jesus His life. Do not forget Jesus' sacrifice. We deserve judgment, but Jesus died in our place. Our sins placed Him on that cross.

B. We must remember that God loves an offender as much as He loves us. We are not to devalue or label this person, whether a Christian or not.

C. We must permanently release their debt to us and release their judgment to God. Just as God forgives our sins, we are to have a zero balance in reproach and judgment toward this person.

D. We must bless and pray for them. Although it is hard to pray and ask God to bless our offender, that is what He tells us to do (Luke 6:28).

E. We must resist Satan. We are not to go to bed angry, rehearse the offense and hurts every day, or use other justifications for offense. The devil will always try to incite us, but do not give him a foothold!

**\*Group Dynamics Idea\*** Plan to meet at an event together, such as National Day of Prayer. This event is held on the first Thursday of May each year. Information for this year's event can be found at [prayer.gatewaypeople.com](http://prayer.gatewaypeople.com).

## Discuss

1. What is the definition of *forgive*?
2. Read Matthew 18:21–35. How does the lesson from this story challenge us to let go of a grudge?
3. According to Pastor Jimmy, revenge, hardness of heart, or praying against someone are forms of unforgiveness. What are some other forms of unforgiveness?
4. How does unforgiveness open the door to the enemy? What does God's Word say we are to do when the enemy comes in like a flood (James 4:7)?
5. What is God's perspective on forgiveness (Psalm 103:8–14)? Using these verses as our guide, what should our attitude be?
6. Explain this statement: "Blessing our enemy forces forgiveness from our heads to our hearts."
7. If you are comfortable doing so, share a time when God gave you victory over unforgiveness. Your testimony can be what motivates someone else to forgive.

**Take Home** As we conclude, remember the following:

- The poison of unforgiveness damages the vessel it is stored in.
- Forgiveness does not make the offender right; it just makes you free.
- Forgiveness is one of the most self-loving things we will ever do.

## Prayer

Jesus, help me to forgive and bless, rather than relive and stress. I am lifting up any bitterness or accumulated offenses to You. I release it all into Your hands. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**\*New Leader Tip\*** When someone in your group is struggling, invite members to join you for a casual get together over coffee or perhaps lunch. Fellowship and laughter can soothe troubled times.