

THREE STEPS TOWARDS FORGIVENESS

The first step - identification - can be as painful as the original wound. Sometimes, because of or fear of the emotional intensity, we minimize the extent of the hurt. We may even mistake the presence of intense emotional reactions as indication of unforgiveness. The second step - recognizing the reaction - will help work through these possibilities. The third step - taking responsibility for our response - examines the process of replacing unforgiveness and reactions with God’s truth.

I. IDENTIFY THE WOUND

I was wronged, hurt, or felt rejected:

<i>By (Name of Individual)</i>	<i>At around (my age)</i>	<i>What he or she did or said to me</i>
1. _____		
2. _____		
3. _____		
4. _____		
Etc. _____		

II. RECOGNIZE THE REACTION

We can respond to pain in two ways: according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. The Proverbs often remind us to respond in the Spirit:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And do not lean on your own understanding...
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 5:5-6*

Children often “lean on their own understanding” (respond according to the flesh) because of limited experience and understanding of life as well as God’s ways. Adults may have limited knowledge of God in addition to habitual reaction which have their roots in childhood. Recognizing where I may be “leaning on my own understanding” is the second step to healing the original wound.

In this stage we ask: How did I uniquely respond to this wrong (of Step 1)? What was the initial impact and how does this memory affect the present? My actions, thoughts, words, emotions, behaviors, attitudes, way I treat my spouse or my children or my friends or my coworkers).

Possible reactions to being wounded (you may have others) include:

Sleeping, withdrawal, blame, anger, fear, eating, worry, “stuffing it”, performance, guilt, “shame attacks”, thoughts are filled with “shoulds” and/or “oughts” and/or “if onlies”, pretending it didn’t happen, excusing the offender, wearing a “mask”, judging, distrust of others, self-righteousness, self-condemnation, resentment, etc.

<i>Initial impact</i>	<i>how the memory impacts me now</i>
1. _____	
2. _____	
3. _____	
4. _____	
Etc. _____	

Now that you have identified the wounds, their cause, and your responses, you are ready for the cleansing of forgiveness. It is suggested that you pray this out loud with a person you trust. You may be surprised by the intensity of emotion that is released.

A SAMPLE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

Dear Lord, I thank You that on the cross You paid the price for all my wrongdoing, sins, and trespasses of the past, present, and future. I thank you for saving me when I turned to You and yielded my life to You and I know my sins are not even remembered in heaven.

I confess, Jesus, that I have held (anger, bitterness, resentment, etc.) against (name) for (what he or she did or said) to me. I ask You now to forgive me, Lord, for holding those feelings, and now I, at the same time, release and forgive (same name) for that sin and hurt that was done to me.

I thank You, Lord, that in Your Name I am cleansed of this hurt, which I have held onto. I praise You for the freeing power of forgiveness. Amen.

III. MY RESPONSIBILITY - A GODLY RESPONSE

In this step we ask: Have I acknowledged and taken responsibility for my own reaction and resulting faults and failures? How can I respond to “wrongs, hurts, and rejection” in a way that conforms me to the image of Jesus and that enables me to reflect God’s glory (Romans 8:28-29 and II Corinthians 3:18)? Learn to bless, out of the abundance of the riches God has bestowed on us (1 Peter 3:9). Joseph can be an example for us (Genesis 50:20), recognizing that God can work any circumstance for our good.

The command to “acknowledge” God in all our ways (Proverbs 5:6) is what puts feet to our responding according to the Spirit. The Hebrew word for acknowledge means “to know, to ascertain by seeing” and includes the ideas of observation, recognition, and to be aware.

The fulfillment of this final step comes gradually as we fill our hearts with God by coming to Him daily in prayer. Spend time with Him. Get to know Him. Learn to trust Him. Glorify and praise Him. Confess to Him. Ask Him to guide you. He promised you that if you would come to Him daily, He would give you rest for your weary soul. As you spiritually commune with Him at a regular time you will learn to sense His presence, to hear His voice, to know His leading, to understand how circumstances are opportunities to grow like Jesus and reflect God’s glory to the world, to accept His unconditional love for you. If you have had difficulty with daily quiet times, writing your prayer time is very beneficial to building the discipline, and you have a written record of your progress.

Through this process, you will become aware and secure in the Lord’s love for you. You will notice yourself becoming:

- Less sensitive to unintentional hurts,
- More capable of admitting when you have been wrong,
- Less demanding for others’ attention and affection,
- Less needful for other’s approval,
- Less self-punishing,
- More accepting of weakness in yourself and others.

CONVICTION OR CONDMENATION

God convicts. Satan condemns.

Conviction produces godly sorrow (repentance) and leads to life (II Corinthians 7:10; John 10:10; Acts 11:18).

Condemnation leads eventually to death, is accusing in nature, and can come from our own hearts, but is not from God. (See John 10:10; Revelation 12:10; I John 3:18-21; Romans 8:1).

Self-abasement is not repentance (Colossians 2:16-23) – it is a form of self-condemnation and therefore does not bring peace nor freedom from guilt or shame.

Forms of Self-Abasement

Self hate: Isaiah 45:9
Isaiah 45:11
Isaiah 64:8

Treating the body severely: Col. 3:16-23

Habitual debilitating, discouraging, depressive self-talk: Mathew 18:34

Self-imposed “penance” period after confessing sin and before we allow ourselves to “feel” God’s forgiveness:
Luke 15:17-20a

Solutions Towards Freedom

Romans 14:16; Col. 3:12-13;
I Thessalonians 5:22-24;
I Peter 2:9-10

Romans 8:15; Romans 14:17;
Galatians 5:1

I Peter 2:23b-24; Col. 3:13b;
John 8:32; Luke 4:18

Full restoration of fellowship and sonship and joy - this is what God gives:
Luke 15:20b-24

FORGIVING Wrongs * Resentments * Hurts * Rejection

We build a bridge from unforgiveness to forgiveness through the process of the search for truth.

The Process (the search for truth, what is being forgiven)



UNFORGIVENESS
Characterized by:

1. anger, bitterness
Endless whys
2. a demand for justice
(the wronged party is judge, jury, executioner)
3. an inordinate concern for self.
(my rights, my feelings, my hurts, etc.)

FORGIVENESS
characterized by:

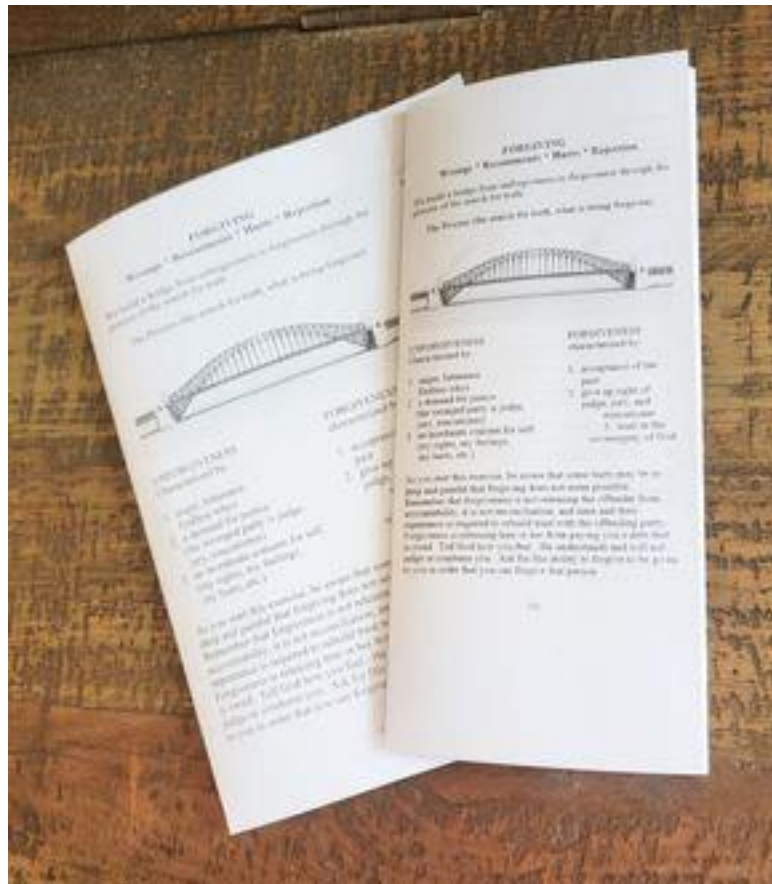
1. acceptance of the past
2. give up right of judge, jury, and executioner
3. trust in the sovereignty of God

As you start this exercise, be aware that some hurts may be so deep and painful that forgiving does not seem possible. Remember that forgiveness is not releasing the offender from accountability, it is not reconciliation, and time and their repentance is required to rebuild trust with the offending party. Forgiveness is releasing him or her from paying you a debt that is owed. Tell God how you feel - He understands and will not judge or condemn you. Ask for His ability to forgive to be given to you in order that you can forgive that person.

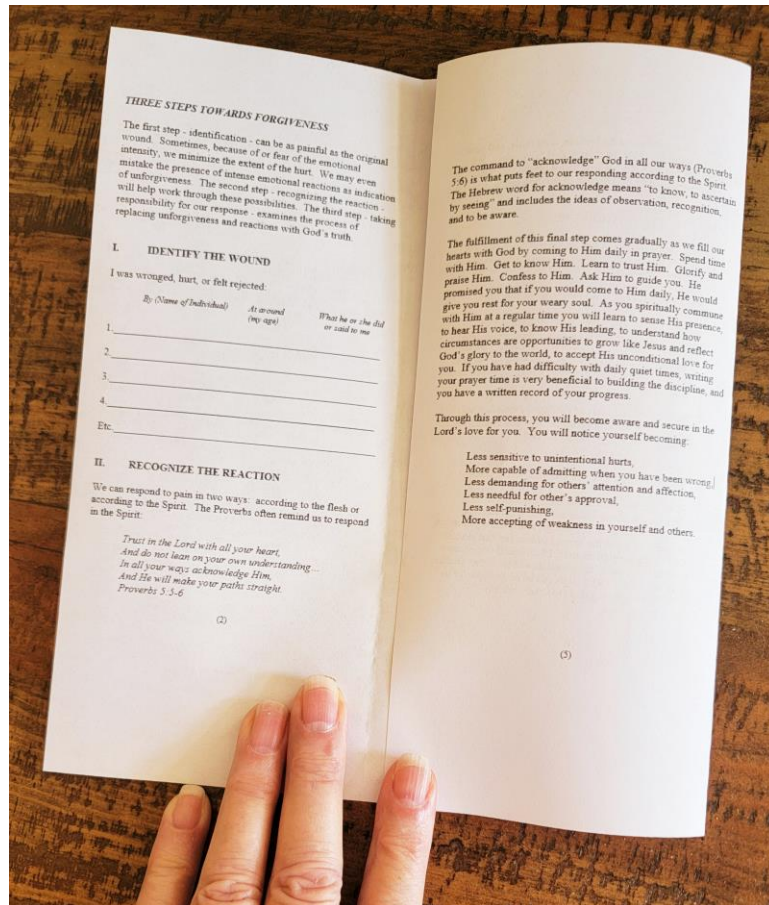
PRINT INSTRUCTIONS:

This is designed to be a trifold 'pamphlet' that easily fits in your Bible our quiet time journal.

Print front to back, according to page numbers, and paying attention to your printer's settings to make sure the inside and outside match accurately.



8.5 x 14 size on left – 8.5 x 11 on right



Inside

