FINDING FREEDOM

Finding Freedom From Unforgiveness

Overview:

We all have been and will be, let down, hurt, or offended by others. It's just a reality of living in a fallen world with imperfect people. Knowing how to forgive others effectively is a critical key to successfully negotiating our way through life in alignment with God's will. Think about it, the central and most powerful message of the Gospel is that Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins. If forgiveness is the key to having a fulfilling relationship with your Heavenly Father, it must also be a key to having fulfilling relationships with one another. You must become deeply convinced that forgiving others when they hurt, offend or fail you is a better way to live. Having this belief anchored in your soul is essential to walking out life in a manner that honors and pleases God.

When we have been let down, hurt, or offended by another person, our emotions can begin to run wild. Anger, hatred, bitterness, and rejection surge through our hearts, and our mind begins to spin with a torrid flurry of unloving thoughts. In our emotional state, we typically fix our eyes on everything the other person did wrong. We can often allow this one failure on their part to completely destroy every belief we have ever had of them being a good and decent human being.

Based on their hurtful actions, we consciously or unconsciously redefine this person's identity and value by placing devaluing labels upon them. We label them with unloving words such as loser, cheater, liar, untrustworthy, stubborn, and uncaring, and then relate to them through our judgmental hate-filled point of view. It's quite common that in addition to labeling our new arch-enemy, based on their bad behavior, we draw bad conclusions regarding what they think about us. We are sure, without a shadow of a doubt, of conclusions like: "They don't care about me," or "They don't love and appreciate me." Because if they did care, love or appreciate me, they would have never acted like they did!

In the midst of our hurt, we become thoroughly convinced we know why this evil person acted with such careless malice and often believe it was a conscious malicious act on their part. All of these thoughts are usually pure speculation that comes from our wounded, hurting hearts. But it doesn't stop there. We also believe this person "owes" us. They need to "pay" for what they did and compensate us for the debt they are now in. While there may be a real physical debt involved, such as money or the replacement of a treasured object, more often than not, the emotional debt we believe they owe us far outweighs any physical debt involved. We hold them responsible for our hurting hearts and believe they owe us respect, love, and likely an apology for all the wrong they did.

These situations often trigger and reinforce our deepest insecurities about ourselves. The self-condemning beliefs that lurk in the depths of your soul that say things like "No one loves me," "I'm not enough," "I'm a failure," or "I'm unwanted" emerge in the midst of your mental

mess. These lies about ourselves are compounded by our lack of trust in God. To the level we believe that God won't be our protector, provider, deliverer, or restorer, we are left to believe we must fend for ourselves. The volume of these devaluing and destructive thoughts quickly drowns out the voice of God and can spiral us into a place of self-pity and hopelessness. The combination of these fear-based beliefs about ourselves and God surface and often manifest in the forms of defensive, retaliatory, as well as withdrawing or fleeing behaviors. All these are forms of self-protection and reflect a lack of trust in who God says He is, what God says He can do, who God says we are, and what God says we can do!

Keys to Breakthrough

Revelation of Your Sin

Due to our fixation on the villainous acts of the other person, we often unconsciously see ourselves as innocent victims. While at times we may have been the innocent bystander who was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, more often than not, we too miss the mark of 1 Corinthians 16:14 that says, "Let all that you do, be done in love." Our road to finding freedom can only begin when we begin to see how we have fallen short of God's law of love before, during, and after the hurtful situation took place. In the New Testament, the Greek word for sin is defined as "to miss the mark." Recognizing the ways you missed the mark is essential to your breakthrough.

With brutal honesty, we need to reflect upon how our thoughts and behaviors don't align with the unconditional loving ways of God. This is not our natural tendency. However, beginning to allow the Holy Spirit to bring you to the sobering place of seeing your ways contrasted to God's ways and your thoughts contrasted with God's thoughts is the revelation we all need. Until you come to the conclusion "I'm not innocent" in your situation, you will continue to justify and defend your unloving bad behavior, even before God. Taking responsibility for all the unloving thoughts, feelings, and actions during the course of the conflict sets you up to properly pray through the situation using the Finding Freedom prayer model. We have to "own our stuff" before we can really begin to confess, renounce, forgive, rebuke, and declare in a manner that will produce the fruit of repentance.

Devaluing Labels & Destructive Lies

Our emotions and thoughts are intimately interconnected. To regain our peace, we must purposely, with prayer, deafen and defeat the devaluing labels and destructive lies. The kingdom of darkness, which longs to steal, kill and destroy our relationships, thrives when we don't silence the volume of these powerful destructive voices in our soul.

Often, without much help from the Holy Spirit, we can usually identify the devaluing labels we have placed on the villain of our situation that we need to renounce. However, the key to effectively uprooting devaluing labels and destructive lies is to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's perspective of this person. We need the revelation of how God sees this other person if we are going to be able to align our thoughts with His thoughts. Unlike us, God sees the heart. Instead of jumping to bad conclusions and labeling the other person a stubborn,

unloving liar, God sees a scared insecure and deceived person trying to cope the best they can. He sees with eyes of compassion. He understands the brokenness of a man / woman who is deeply longing to be loved. The powerful question to reflect on to help you get in touch with God's perspective about the other person is: Who does God say he / she is? Get a hold of those truths, and begin to declare each of them to realign your mind and heart.

You need to pause and reflect in a similar manner upon any devaluing labels or destructive lies that you are believing about yourself. These lies were likely already firmly in place when this unfortunate situation took place. We all have lurking lies that undermine our God-given identity. The numerous failures and shame-filled exploits of our past have laid a firm foundation for our negative self-image. A great reflection is to ask the Holy Spirit to clearly reveal the devaluing labels you have come to believe about yourself that influenced your actions during that situation. However, as I stated above, it's critical to not only identify the lies you'll need to renounce but also to receive the revelation of the truths you need to declare. Ask the Holy Spirit, "Who does God say I am?" and "What does God say I can do?". Begin to receive those truths and allow God to deposit them deeply into your soul as you confidently declare them to dismantle the devaluing labels and destructive lies.

The compounding effect of believing devaluating lies about ourselves, such as "I'm unloveable," is we unconsciously expect the people around us to meet our emotional needs. As such, we allow their words and actions to weigh our worth. We feel great when they cheer for us and meltdown when they jeer at us! At the first shred of evidence that a person is not enthusiastically for us, we conclude that they don't love, accept, or respect us at all! This type of bad conclusion typically reveals what we believe the other person "owes" us, which really reveals that we don't fully believe God's truth that we are loved!

When I'm battling bad conclusions like "They don't love me," the first stage of the battle is to give them the benefit of the doubt. If I don't "know that I know" the conclusion I have come to about them is true (which would require me to talk with them and verify what they were thinking), I will choose to renounce my conclusion as a lie. If you have thoughts about another person that don't sound like faith, hope, and love and are not helping you be a more loving and compassionate person, I suggest you disown those thoughts by renouncing them.

The second stage of this battle involves asking God to forgive you for letting the words and actions of others weigh your worth. Allowing self-destructive lies to hold more weight than God's truth's about you is a plan directly from the pit of hell. You know who the father of lies is. Don't let his lies undermine the truth of your God-given identity. You must contend against the lies and for the truth of who God says you are.

Get Specific

A key question I challenge people to answer when it comes to forgiving a person who has hurt or failed them is: "What do you need to forgive them for?"

We can often easily identify the actions or words that were said that left us feeling devalued and unappreciated, but oftentimes I find people don't take the time to clearly identify the emotional / relational damage which has been done to the relationship. For example, if a person lied to you or cheated on you, most people would feel that person betrayed their trust. When praying to forgive them, you need to forgive them for their lying or cheating, but also for betraying your trust. Be sure to take the time to get specific so you'll be sure that your forgiveness prayer covers all the bases.

Forgiving others can be the hardest prayers to pray, but remember, your ability to forgive others demonstrates your ultimate trust in God. You need to know, anything you believe this person owes you can be provided by your all-loving Heavenly Father.

Unforgiveness Prayer

While there are many unique situations and circumstances when it comes to praying through situations where you have been hurt, offended, and rejected, below is a scripted prayer to help lead you through repenting from unforgiveness.

I want you to pray the following prayer out loud. I don't want you just to read it. I want you to do your best to make these words a heartfelt prayer to God. To do this, I suggest you first read over a section of the prayer silently to familiarize yourself with what the prayer says. Then pause, still your heart before God, and pray the words out loud to Him from your heart. Where you see "*(name)*" in the prayer, insert the name of the person you have judged as you pray.

Confess Lord forgive me for holding anger, hatred and bitterness towards *[Name]*. Please forgive me for *[unloving things I said or did]*. Father, I ask You to forgive me for judging *[Name]* and holding onto unforgiveness. Lord, deep down, I was just really hurt, and today, I want to give all the pain in my heart to You.

Renounce Heavenly Father, I ask You to forgive me for labeling *[Name]* a *[Negative, devaluing labels]* I come before You today and renounce the lie that *[Name]* is a *[label #1]*. I renounce the lie that he/she is a *[label #2].* I break these labels and lies in Jesus' mighty name.

Declare Lord, the truth is this person is Your son/daughter and, like me, is imperfect but loved by You. I declare they are *[loving words of Truth about this person that opposes the lies]*.

Renounce Lord, forgive me for buying into the lie that *[Name]* meant to hurt me. I really have no idea what his/her motives were. I come against the lie that he/she *[Lies you believe about the way they feel about you]*. Lord forgive me for labeling myself *[Labels you put on yourself].* I break and renounce the lie that I am *[labels you put on yourself]*. I also ask You to forgive me for believing the lie that You *[Lies about God]*.

Forgive Dear Heavenly Father, the best I know how, I come before You today to forgive

[Name]. I forgive him/her for *[The hurtful things said or done to you, and the emotional, relational damage caused by their actions.]*.

Rebuke Lord Jesus, I rebuke the spirit *[Demonic spirits potentially afflicting you]*. I break your ties spirits of *[Demonic spirits potentially afflicting you]*. Go now in the mighty name of Jesus.

Declare Father right now I ask You to release Your healing love to cleanse my heart. Come and flood my hurting heart with Your perfect love. I receive Your forgiveness Father, for all that I have confessed to You today. I declare that I am forgiven. Right now, Jesus, I declare the Truth that I am *[Loving words of Truth which oppose the lies I believed about myself]*. I pray right now You would bless *[Name].* Comfort him/her and draw him/her closer to You in this time. I pray You would release Your love and peace into his/her heart.

If the relationship needs to be restored, pray the following:
Father, I pray in the spiritual realms You would cleanse our relationship. Remove any spiritual defilement that has afflicted our relationship due to my reactions to this situation. Help bring us back together in unity in Jesus' mighty name! Amen.

By Jason Lehfeldt