

Forgiveness

by Mike Tucker *

God's act of forgiveness toward us is a one-time event. We ask once, He forgives, He forgets, and that's the end of it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Our forgiveness of others should be the same, but it's not always easy. Sometimes forgiveness is a process that has to be repeated again and again.

Maybe as many as ten years ago—or even twenty—someone hurt you. You forgave them and, for all practical purposes, forgot about it...until something happened to re-open the wound. It could be a conversation, a circumstance, a chance event, or any number of other things that causes you to find yourself struggling again with unforgiveness. It's not that you weren't sincere in your first (or second, or third) attempt to forgive them, it's just that the hurt will not go completely away.

A few years ago a business associate took advantage of me financially. I forgave him and made an effort to move on. Sometime last year, I was racing through an airport to make a connecting flight, and I saw him. He saw me, too, I'm sure, but he diverted his eyes and kept moving past me. All of a sudden the resentment from the past came rushing back. As I took my seat on the plane, I realized I would repeat the process of forgiving this person, or it would nag at me for the rest of the day—or maybe even the rest of the month.

I have no doubt I was sincere in my desire to forgive him completely. But sometimes the bonds of bitterness aren't easily broken. Sometimes we have to forgive someone again and again before it is settled completely in our own mind.

Jesus told Peter that we are to forgive our brother "seventy-times-seven." I always assumed he was referring to "seventy-times-seven" separate offenses. The fact is he could have been referring to a single event.

Don't let past hurts hold you back. Reliving the pain from last month, or last year, or your previous church, or from junior high, isn't worth the price you have to pay. It keeps you from focusing on what God has called you to do today: serve Him with joy, and love Him with all your heart.

With Love,
Mike

* Mike Tucker is the speaker/director of Faith for Today.
Article used by permission.
Faith Moment
June 21, 2010