

PRAYER STUDY 32

"Forgiveness"

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Benefits of Forgiving One Another

1. It is a means of our forgiveness. *"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."*
2. It will restore Christian fellowship. *"But if anyone has caused grief...you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, let perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow."*
3. It will cleanse you spiritually. *"And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."*

BASIC STEPS TO A FORGIVING SPIRIT

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1. Realize that God is working through the actions of your offender. *As long as we think that the one who hurts us is acting independently, we can hardly help growing bitter. But as long as we realize that God "raised him up" for a specific purpose in our lives, we will be able to gain a forgiving spirit. They may think evil against us, but God means it for good. (Genesis 50:20)*
2. Thank God for the benefit He plans through each offense. *God's command to give thanks in all things is especially essential at this point. (1st Thessalonians 5:18) We don't have to be thankful in order to thank God. Thanking God is an act of the will. Being thankful is an act of the emotions. When our lives are dedicated to God, He puts*

• Every person we "hear" through a right response to their offenses becomes an "open door" to the lives of others who also need to know how to apply these principles to their lives. Those we offend become closed doors to further opportunities in our lives.

a protective wall around us so that nothing can touch us except that which God permits. He permits it for a purpose, and this purpose is for our ultimate joy and reward. It is for this reason we can thank God for each offense.

3. Discern what character qualities God wants to develop in me through the offense. *When we wrongly react to an offender, we are revealing various lacks of character which need to be developed such as love, meekness, patience, faith, gentleness, self-control, etc. Even if we respond correctly to an offender, other qualities will have to be strengthened such as joy, peace, godliness, etc.*
4. Expect to suffer for doing right as a normal part of Christian living. *Many of us have the mistaken idea that if we are a Christian we won't have to suffer, yet Scripture clearly states, "For unto you, it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29) "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Timothy 3:12) "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (II Timothy 2:12)*

HOW WE LOSE BY A WRONG RESPONSE

