

Forgiveness and Healing

Forgiveness is a good medicine for one's physical and mental health. A heart at peace will help him physically and protect him against harmful emotions. A person who forgives others will experience great peace not only with men but also with God. God will surely hear his prayers and will heal him. God cannot overlook a refusal by us to show mercy to others, for this is contrary to His nature.

Jesus taught that it is a person's responsibility to forgive for receiving the mercy of God. Believers must confess their sins to God and their faults to one another. In Matt. 5:23-24, Jesus stressed total reconciliation. Jesus taught His followers to leave the sacrifice and go make matters right. Jesus' parable of the 'The Unforgiving Servant' points out the need for forgiveness between man and man and also between man and God (Matt. 18:23-35). Thus forgiveness and reconciliation may be considered as pre-requisites for prayer and worship.

The need for forgiveness is also mentioned in 'The Disciples Prayer' (Matt. 6:12 and Luke 11:4). In this prayer, Jesus taught His disciples the necessity of having a forgiving attitude. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). Jesus taught His disciples to ask for pardon for their sins as they themselves forgave their debtors. This wording implies that the person praying has already forgiven any injury received. Otherwise it would be impossible honestly to ask God's forgiveness for one's own sins. Jesus followed it by saying, "for if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15). The aim of forgiveness must be to alter the strained relationship and to begin a new one based on reconciliation.

The Apostle Paul in his epistles to both Ephesians and Colossians has pointed out that our forgiveness should be just as how the Lord forgave us. Ephesians 4:32 exhorts us to forgive each other, just as in Christ God forgave us. Colossians 3:13 says that we should bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances we may have against one another. We are told to forgive as the Lord forgave us. The Apostle James says in James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." Believers must confess their sins to God and their faults to one another.

There is a damaging effect to the physical body when a person holds anger, bitterness, resentment and even hatred. It is possible that the above harmful emotions can cause sickness in a person's body. Proverbs 14:30 says that a heart at peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones. Proverbs 17:22 says that a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Human relationships can become complicated due to unforgiveness. Sometimes an inner healing is needed before praying for physical healing. Therefore forgiveness must be pursued for the sake of our own healing and recovery.



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