

## HAVE FAITH FOR FORGIVENESS (PART 1)

- Are you a person who easily forgives? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been surprised by an act of forgiveness by or from another person? Describe it.
- Why do you think people get offended? Why is it so hard to forgive sometimes?

The implications of this strategy are so vast that we're going to avoid any clever set-up. *The fact is both offense and forgiveness are by far the most critical factors in relationships today.* Nothing is more debilitating than wounds that come from being offended. And a lack of forgiveness can have a cancerous effect far beyond the initial issues and relationships. Offenses are like bungee cords tethered to our hearts and minds. We think they don't affect us until we want to press forward to new levels of relational success and fulfillment. At that point, they snap us back and often cause painful ripples for everyone.

- **Is there someone in your life that you know you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness?**

Offenses can happen on multiple levels and degrees of severity. They can start with outright assaults, or start small like paper cuts. Either way, offense is not the cut. Offense is like a viral infection. It only needs a small opening to fester and infect the entire person body, mind and spirit. Because of this, a major gash or several minor paper cuts can be equally deadly.

The reality is an offense is nothing more than an *unmet expectation*. The expectation may be right out in the open. For example, we expect a certain level of politeness and friendliness from personal and professional circles. So if someone were to suddenly publicly hurl insults at us, most people will become offended. But there are much more subtle expectations that we can have, especially with people we love such as family. In these underlying expectations we can become most offended. Another common path to offense is to place unhealthy and unrealistic expectations on others. People will always let us down!

We cannot avoid being offended. And sometimes we are offended and don't even know it! Remember that viruses and infections can go undetected but wreak massive havoc. When we don't forgive others, we create the perfect environment for symptoms to cause us pain without revealing the true source.

- **Do you believe there is ever a time where being offended and not forgiving is acceptable?**

Consider this. An offense is not dangerous unless you hang onto it and let it dwell within you. Some people even hide behind their offense because it justifies their victim mentalities instead of submitting to the humbling work of reconciliation. When you are offended you are making it *all about you*. This means being offended is ultimately a selfish act which squashes the capacity to give and experience true love in trust and vulnerability. Now all this being said, you do however have a right to protect yourself, in most cases by setting healthy boundaries, or seek justice in the case of actual damages or inhumane actions.

So how can we nullify the cancerous power of offense? Forgiveness is the antidote and vaccine. And although we say that you should never make offense about you, forgiveness is actually a self-preserving act. The act of forgiveness eliminates the power that another person or situation has in *your* life. When you don't have expectations, or better yet, you just *expect* to be let down, you cannot be offended. The wonderful benefit of this is you will no longer have to react or be insecure, because the moment you are offended, you have the ability to process the hurt and eventually forgive.

*Forgiveness has nothing to do with whoever is right or wrong.* If one has to argue based on the Gap between right and wrong, then everyone has lost the battle before it has begun. Reconciliation is actually about valuing relationships and peace above counting score. This perspective is the first step to forgiveness.

*Forgiveness requires a great deal of faith.* We recognize that forgiveness is not easy because as people, we have a tremendous capacity to be selfish, cruel and inflict terrible hurts on each other. If this is the case, we validate your pain. But in Re:LIFE, we define faith as “trusting the invisible—living the impossible.” When you forgive, you have to trust that positive spiritual energies and emotions are coming into alignment and that even the most impossible-to-forgive situations can be overcome in love and peace.

Here is a practical step-by-step method for forgiveness:

**Step 1: *Stop and be honest about why you are offended.*** Are you being unrealistic or selfish? Or do you have a legitimate case for offense? Feel free to ask someone else, such as a trusted friend or mentor, to be *brutally* honest with you. Just remember, *you* have to have the conviction before anyone else.

**Step 2: *Take responsibility for your part.*** This prevents you from playing the “blame game” and being the victim. Should you have been better at communication or clearer with your expectations? Or maybe you should have confronted the issue sooner. Whatever it is, you *always* have a part to play.

**Step 3: *Sincerely release them into your blessing and forgiveness before you plan any confrontation.*** Remember that this requires faith! The act of blessing someone and setting positive intentions for even the worst offenders puts you in a Life-based posture of humility. You may have to do this for a while.

**Step 4: *Go directly to the individual and confess your offense.*** People have the tendency to publicize their offense to the wrong people which just makes everything worse. Talking to the wrong people sets a negative intention that will attract even more pain. During your “confrontation of reconciliation” ask for forgiveness for your responsibility in the situation and then share why you were originally offended. Then share your blessings for them and that you have released everything into forgiveness.

**Step 5: *Be prepared for any response.*** In many cases, that person won’t have even known that they offended you. Sometimes they know exactly what they did but were just avoiding confrontation. But also be prepared to accept the person who will just deny everything and even lash back at you. Whatever their response, you must be prepared to respond with love and acceptance. At this moment, it is no longer about you. The universal principle of reaping and sowing applies here. So if they stay angry, then those seeds will produce the appropriate fruit at the appropriate time. What they walk away with, reconciled or not, is not something we have the right to judge. Your part is to continually bless and release them.

One last point; just because you forgive, it does not mean you have to forget completely and just go back to the same place of vulnerabilities and expectations. History is a great teacher that builds wisdom. One can love others and be wise by setting healthy boundaries!

- **What have you recognized and reframed about this strategy and how will you practically respond to this? Have faith and make a plan for forgiveness!**

In part 2, we will discuss different strategies for forgiveness especially in sensitive circumstances. We will also show how to manage situations where justice and restitution are necessary. This week, reflect on what factors in your world seem to trigger offense. You may require more action!