

## **Twelve Steps to Forgiveness**

*Stomping Out the Darkness by Neil Anderson & Dave Park*

1. *Write on a sheet of paper the names of the persons who hurt you.* Describe in writing the specific wrongs you suffered, for example, rejection, gossip, lack of love, unfairness, physical, verbal sexual or emotional abuse, hatred, etc. Ask the Lord to reveal to your mind specifically who you need to forgive from your heart. Some names may come to your mind that surprise you or that you have forgotten. The two most overlooked people for these lists are God and yourself. God doesn't need forgiven, but sometimes we hold false expectations of God that lead us to anger toward Him.
2. *Face the hurt and the hate.* Write down how you feel about these people and their offense. It's not a sin to admit the reality of your emotions. God knows how you feel whether you admit it or not. If you bury your feelings you will bypass the possibility of forgiveness.
3. *Realize that the cross of Christ makes forgiveness possible.* Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world— including yours and those of the persons who have offended you—and He died “once for all” (see Hebrews 10:10).
4. *Decide that you will bear the burden of each person's sin (see Galatians 6:1,2).* This means that you will not strike back at the person in the future by using the information about his sin against him (see Proverbs 17:9, Luke 6:27-34). We are to take the burden of offenses against us just as Christ took the burden of our sins.
5. *Decide to forgive.* Forgiveness is an act of the will, a conscious choice to let the other person off the hook and free yourself from the past. You may not feel like making this decision. But since God tells you to, you can choose to forgive. Make that decision now and your feelings of forgiveness will follow in time.
6. *Take your list to God and pray the following: “I forgive (name) for (list of offenses).”* Let God bring to the surface every remembered pain. Stay with that person until every rejection, injustice, abuse, betrayal, or neglect is specifically identified. Then go on to the next person. If you have felt bitter

toward this person for some time, you may want to find a Christian counselor or trusted friend who will pray with you about it (see James 5:16).

7. *Destroy the List.* You are now free. Do not tell the offenders what you have done. Your forgiveness is between you and God only! The person you may need to forgive could be dead, such as a parent who abused you. It doesn't matter. You still need to forgive.
8. *Do not expect that your decision to forgive will result in major changes in the other persons.* Instead, pray for them (see Matthew 5:44) so they too may find the freedom of forgiveness (see Galatians 5:1,13,14).
9. *Try to understand the people you have forgiven.* They are victims also.
10. *Expect positive results of forgiveness in you.* In time you will be able to think about the people who offended you without feeling hurt, anger, or resentment. In many cases your forgiveness may result in your relationship being restored. In some cases that may not happen if they don't want the relationship restored.
11. *Thank God for the lessons you have learned and the maturity you have gained as a result of your decision to forgive offenders (see Romans 8:28,29).*
12. *Be sure to accept your part of the blame.* Confess your failure to God and to others (see 1 John 1:9). Realize that if someone has something against you, you must go to that person (see Matthew 5:23-26).