



By Jeanne Sheffield Estrada, Th.D.

ARTICLE 7: Granting The Gift

In this seventh step across the Forgiveness Bridge to Freedom we are now just one more step before we reach our final destination to realizing forgiveness and finding the freedom you have been searching to discover.

IN each of the preceding six freedom steps we have worked through up to this point we have discussed forgiveness in theory. Now we're ready to actually experience proactive forgiveness from God, and then we will be ready to receive it for ourselves and then be able to give it. The is why I call this particular lesson today "Granting The Gift."

I also what to encourage you to supplement these lessons with reading the articles on our web site at NotesOnLife.org/forgiveness. There is a lot to take in in order to reach our goal of "The Restoration Place" so you may want or need to review all these lessons again and again so that you will be able to retain and apply it. I highly suggest you do this, so for today please have your paper and pen ready to take notes and let's begin today's lesson.

There are two parts of this forgiveness puzzle.

There is forgiveness that we need to give to release towards that have offended us and there is forgiveness that we need to ask for where we have offended someone. We do this in our heart but we also do it with our mouth through the POWER OF WORDS!

WORDS ARE SO POWERFUL!! They can bring joy, happiness, laughter and togetherness but when misused can bring sadness, anger, discord, resentment and even separation to others. I believe that one of the greatest gifts of all is our power to choose our words and the thoughts we put in our minds.

Pastor Chuck Swindall once said that another person had been greatly hurt by something he had done and was so disturbed about what happened that he got on an airplane and flew to his friend's city make things right, clear his conscience and to ask him for forgiveness. Once he did, it was a sigh of relief for both of them! This is an example of how when you ask for forgiveness, you bring release and healing into relationships.

If you can't meet the person that you've offended, you can always call them, but the drawback is that there is no facial communication or feedback from body language and it is very helpful that the offended party sees your sincerity and remorse. A written letter is the least preferred method and can be easily misinterpreted if not written well, and if written do not email but handwrite it. Such a personal method tells the person that this is serious and sincere on your part. Whatever method you choose, make sure you act quickly.

Unfortunately, not every attempt at reconciliation results in a warm hug and a happy ending. The other party may sense that you are not remorseful, and the best thing to demonstrate is sincerity. On the other hand the other person may be partly to blame in the tension between you as well and they may find it difficult to release the wrong because it's much easier to handle our own guilt if we can balance it with blame toward another. They might confuse forgiveness and resolution of the conflict between you with reconciliation, and they may not be ready to do that. Sometimes are best heartfelt and honest efforts can fall flat, so be prepared that it may not work out.

Over previous lessons, one issue we've covered is "Are you still suffering from a guilty conscience?" Do you seem to repeat the same scenarios from your past over and over? Has unresolved guilt caused you to keep your distance from God? Well the reason why is that guilt can build up and grow over time and produce even more separation between you and the offended party as well. That guilt can make you feel isolated from what you might dearly want.

The same phenomenon of separation occurs in our relationship with God. Why? Because we are ashamed and feel laden with guilt. That's why we need to learn how to deal with guilt constructively.

The Apostle Paul tells us that there are two essentials for the Christian life – FAITH and GOOD CONSCIENCE when he said:

*"Fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience,
which some rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith."*

If unresolved guilt has caused you to keep your distance from God, don't be afraid to go to Him. He loves you more than you can comprehend, and He will forgive you when you truly repent. Repentance is the key.

So let's also take a close look at how David received God's forgiveness in Psalm 139: 23-24 when he prayed,

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me;
And lead me in the everlasting way."*

He was asking God to search deep into his heart and to look around every corner for anything that was displeasing to God. David was truly repentant and likewise we need to follow his example and ask God to reveal where you may have failed in any area in which you are not aware because He knows everything you have ever done, thought or said in your life. Nothing is going to surprise Him. Are you ready and willing for Him to search every corner in your heart? Your job is to be open and totally and completely honest with Him.

So before you seek forgiveness for yourself or need to ask it from others, start by honestly answering questions about the following. What is

- Your relationship with God... admit all your un-confessed sin, un-kept promises, or failed to nurture your relationship with Him?
- Your Relationship with Your Parents or Siblings... are there areas of ingratitude or unresolved conflicts?
- Your Relationship with Your Spouse... have you had harsh words, selfish attitudes, pridefulness, or been ungrateful?
- Your relationship with Your Children... have you failed to spend time with them or provide spiritual leadership for them?
- Your Relationship with Others... have you had immoral relationships with others, or frequented friendships with people that were not Christ-centered?
- Your Habits... have you practiced unhealthy, immoral or slothful habits that are displeasing to God?
- Your Possessions... are you or have you trusted in money, engaged in dishonest business dealings that have hurt others or failed to be a good steward of what you have been given?

Once you have done this you are now ready for the next phase which will prepare you for taking the final steps across this bridge, but it must start by acknowledging Your Failure to God. When you confess your sins, God doesn't slap His forehead and say, "You did that! I can't believe you!" and He is NOT holding a two-by-four waiting to knock you on the head the moment you admit your guilt! Instead, He's like the loving father in the story of the prodigal son who is patiently waiting for you to come home so that He can forgive you. He loves to forgive sin to those that repent and He does it with abundant grace and his forgiveness knows no time limit.

Once you have received God's forgiveness, you can expect that our adversary Satan try to remind you over and over of what happened in the past. He will tell you that you are not worthy to be forgiven. He may say, "Why do you think God will forgive you?"but pay him no mind!! God has forgotten our sin so move on! You are forgiven...and rest in that and receive it. Your debt to Him has been covered by the Blood of Jesus and when you asked for forgiveness it was nailed to the cross!

After reconciling with God, and knowing that He has forgiven you, and you have forgiven yourself for the negative that you have harbored towards someone, you are now ready to embrace the important finality of forgiving then person that has hurt you. Let it go! Let it be! Fall into that release and freedom! Breathe in that feeling of freedom of forgiveness. It is a sweet fragrance once you reach this place!

So the other side of the forgiveness bridge is asking the forgiveness of someone that you have offended.

Here Are Some Effective Ways To Ask For Another's Forgiveness:

- **Refuse To Blame The Offended Party:** Don't share the offense with them, but concentrate and take ownership for your offense against them
- **Identify The Wrong You've Committed:** Remember the other person is already aware of what you've done; now he or she wants to know that you are fully aware of it.
- **Acknowledge The Hurt You've Caused and Ask For Forgiveness:** Remember that forgiveness is voluntary, it is not forced. The other person needs to forgive as much as you need to be forgiven. Open up your heart and be willing to express your true feelings. Acknowledge your remorse for the hurt you have caused.
- **Be Prepared For A Negative Response:** Not every attempt at reconciliation results in a warm hug and a happy ending. Remember forgiveness is granted, but reconciliation is earned. Always remember neither God nor any other person can accuse you of a wrong you have attempted to make right.

- Two Main Points to Remember: Forgiveness is granted, but reconciliation is earned. Neither God nor any other person can accuse you of wrong if you have attempted to make it right.

If you have not made an attempt to reconcile with someone you may have offended, why not do it now? If you are truly sorry and you want the other person to forgive you, you can ask the Lord to be present with you when you go to this person with a sincere heart and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the correct words to say and He will.

My dear friend, your Father in heaven will be watching you as you do your best to follow all these steps. I encourage you to pray for His help and guidance and He will be with you all along the way. If the other party still does not accept your genuine efforts to ask for forgiveness, you are forgiven by God live your life in peace to go on your way.

Let's Pray:

Dearest Lord in Heaven,

I commit myself to All these steps to act and move in forgiveness, taking in my heart and mind all the things I need to do to make things right between me, you, and others.

I pray that you will walk with me as I initiate each step knowing that you are with me.

I ask for your forgiveness and I pray that this all involved can know that I am sincere. I commit to you to do what is right and honorable in your sight.

In Jesus' holy name I pray, AMEN