Forgiveness – Part 2

We need to forgive others, even when we feel they don't deserve it. As we grow older, hurts can accumulate, so we must address them. Unforgiveness poisons the soul, which is one of the reasons why Jesus commands us to forgive. Howver when we forgive, we walk in freedom. How attractive is that!

1. *What are some of the offenses which have the potential to destroy us?*

a. Hurtful words and verbal abuse — When I left school and began my first job, my boss bullied and belittled me in front of others. The experience left me shattered, and it took time to recover.
b. Betrayal and broken trust. That's horrible and some of you have experienced that. It is one of the most painful experiences a person can endure.
c. Unfair treatment and injustice
d. Rejection, neglect and abandonment
e. Serious harm and misuse of power which could even include sexual violation.

2. *How can we forgive those who hurt us when we don't feel willing to forgive?* We must remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Refusing to forgive harms us.

My wife went through a difficult experience with a woman in the church back in the 1980s. We'll call her Margaret. She was jealous of Pam's position as a pastor's wife. It was bringing distress to the ladies' group that Pam led. The love that had been flowing between them all was being replaced by critical attitudes. Pam knew that the thoughts of one's mind effects one's emotions and she set her heart to control her mind by praying 'I forgive you' every time Margaret came to her mind.
After a fortnight of speaking out 'I forgive you' in her heart and mind, the reality dropped into her heart so fully that she would have been delighted to see Margaret again. But she knew also that wouldn't be wise. Four years later Margaret saw my wife and came up to hug her and say, 'Ive learnt a few things since I saw you last'. It was a form of apology but that was unimportant. Pam had learnt already the principle of overcoming reactions in response to a hurt.
When a hurtful situation feels overwhelming, I sometimes find it helpful to speak confidentially with a wise friend or counsellor. Entrusting the situation to God helps bring healing.

3. *How can we tell when we have forgiven someone*?

a. Forgiveness does not mean *forgetting what happened.* It often becomes evident when we stop replaying the incident or repeatedly telling others about it and no longer take secret pleasure in the offender's misfortune and can sincerely wish them well.
b. Depending on the circumstances, *rebuilding trust may take time,* and it may never be fully restored.
c. The Bible urges us to '*make every effort to live in peace* with everyone' (Hebrews 12:14) implying that reconciliation is not always possible. Sometimes we just must move on while at other times, accepting blame, even when we believe it is misplaced. This can help defuse anger.
d. *Why does God allow us to experience hurt?* Trials can shape our character and make our lives more fruitful. I was once betrayed by a staff member of an organisation I led. She made accusations that we believed were untrue, and I later received a public apology from leaders. Psalm 66:10–12 says: 'For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.'
Through this trial God worked in our lives to make them more effective. Don't waste your sorrows. Let God bring good out of them.

The Lord's prayer: 'Forgive our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'.