

# WEISE WORDS

## WORDS OF WISDOM FOR HEALTHY LIVING

### RELATIONSHIPS: Forgiveness (Part 1)

*"Human power alone is not sufficient to reach full forgiveness. There is an element of forgiveness that is divine. It cannot be reached without God."*

Dr. Frank Minirth, President, Minirth Clinic, Richardson, TX

Forgiveness has been defined as the act of pardoning somebody for a mistake or wrongdoing. Living in a state of unforgiveness can result in a life filled with resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, anger, fear, and stress. It can often be the root cause of depression or anxiety. Unforgiveness is a cancer that eats away at the very soul of a person.

Forgiveness can be a very misunderstood concept. Often a person chooses not to forgive because they truly do not understand the meaning of forgiveness.

#### WHAT FORGIVENESS IS AND IS NOT

##### Forgiveness....

- **does not** mean that any wrongs done to you were acceptable.
- **does not** diminish the evil done against you, nor is it a denial of what happened.
- **does not** take away the consequences the other person will face because of his or her wrongdoing.
- **does not** depend on the other person's actions, and it is not probationary or conditional (for example, saying, "I will forgive you as long as you don't .....").
- **does not** require you to become a "doormat" nor does it require you to allow the offender to hurt you again.
- **does not** wait for the offender to repent.

##### Forgiveness....

- **is** a key part of not letting those wrongs hurt you any longer.
- **is** letting go of your desire to hurt the other person. Simply put, forgiveness means you "cancel a debt."
- **is** a difficult and uncomfortable process. When you make a decision to forgive, God provides the grace and strength to forgive and maintain a heart of forgiveness.
- **is** not weakness. It is the most powerful thing you can do.
- **is** not reconciliation. It takes two to reconcile but only one to forgive.
- **is** a gift you give to the offender. Trust, on the other hand, must be earned.

**FORGIVENESS—Part 1 (Continued)**

***“When you don’t forgive someone, in some way that person is in jail, and you are the warden. You’re incarcerated, too, because you have to make sure the prisoner stays there.”***

**Kerney Franston**

**REASONS TO FORGIVE**

- It sets you free to move on with your life.
- It refuses to let the person who hurt you have any power over your life.
- It opens up your relationship with God (see Matt. 5:43-48).
- It keeps you from becoming bitter, protecting those around you.
- It keeps you from becoming like the person who hurt you.
- Unforgiveness doesn’t hurt the perpetrator at all; it only hurts you.

Excerpts adapted from a book by Tim Clinton and John Trent, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Marriage & Family Counseling* (Baker Books, 2009).

We forgive others because we have been forgiven by God. There is no greater example of forgiveness than when God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross so that we might have forgiveness of our sin. His forgiveness is the basis for our forgiveness. Colossians 3:13 tells us to “forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.”

Forgiveness is best understood as both an act and a process. When a person forgives, his or her heart will begin to heal. In the next *Weise Words* article we will look at the action steps involved in the process of forgiveness. For more information about this article or to receive help with forgiveness, please contact me at [pwcounseling.com](http://pwcounseling.com) or call 813.643.2600. I am here as a resource for you.