

Forgiveness Handout

Key Points from The Art of Forgiving by Dr. Lewis Smedes

1. The most creative power given to the human spirit is the power to heal the wounds of the past it cannot change.
2. We do our forgiving alone inside our hearts and minds; what happens to the people we forgive depends on them.
3. The first person to benefit from forgiving is the one who does it.
4. We cannot forgive a wrong unless we first blame the person who wronged us.
5. We forgive people only for wounding and wronging us; we do not forgive people for things we do not blame them for.
6. Forgiving is a journey; the deeper the wounds, the longer the journey.
7. Forgiving does not require us to reunite with the person who broke our trust.
8. We do not forgive because we are supposed to; we forgive when we are ready to be healed.
9. Waiting for someone to repent before we forgive is to surrender our future to the person who wronged us.
10. Forgiving is not a way to avoid pain but to heal pain.
11. Forgiving is done best when it is done intolerantly.
12. Forgiving someone who breaks a trust does not mean that we give them their job back.
13. Forgiving is the only way to be fair to ourselves.
14. Forgivers are not doormats; to forgive a person is not a signal that we are willing to put up with what s/he does.
15. We do not excuse the person we forgive; we blame the person we forgive.
16. Forgiving is essential; talking about it is optional.
17. When we forgive, we set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner we set free is ourselves.
18. When we forgive we walk in stride with the forgiving God.

Additional notes:

A. Three Stages to Forgiveness (Smedes):

1. Rediscover humanity of the offender
 - a. Sinner saved by grace just like me
2. Surrender our right to get even—Forbearance (Phil. 4:5—forbearing spirit NAS)

We can stop here at this stage—be functional, cordial, and not experience God's Full Redemption, or...

3. Love them and Wish them well—This is God's work in us
 - a. Can wish them well in both your head and heart—we genuinely seek the good of the offender. (Everett Worthington in Forgiveness and Reconciliation talks about the difference between Decisional vs. Emotional forgiveness)
 - b. Opportunity to give them something they need but can't get any other way

B. Everitt Worthington's REACH Model: **R**ecall the hurt, **E**mpathize, **A**ltruistic gift of forgiveness, **C**ommit publicly to forgive, **H**old on to forgiveness

C. Tim Keller: 2 internal battles that must be won to truly forgive:

- 1) resist superiority
- 2) release from liability

D. Lewis Smedes: *"We talk a good forgiving line as long as somebody else needs to do it, but few of us have the heart for it while we are dangling from one end of a bond broken by someone else's cruelty"*