

Chapter 11

Questions to Ponder

1. Prior to reading this chapter, did you hold certain ideas regarding forgiveness that you now realize are misconceptions? If so, what were they? How have these faulty beliefs about forgiveness affected you? What have others told you about forgiveness that has been hurtful or helpful?

2. After reading this chapter, do you believe you are in a place on your healing well journey where you are prepared to forgive your abuser? If not, what do you think is holding you back?
3. If you are ready to forgive your abuser, take the time to write a prayer or a statement of forgiveness that truly reflects what you think and feel. Remember that forgiveness is both a decision and a process. You get to set the pace. Do not permit others to determine this for you. If you are not yet ready to make this decision, what will help you get to that place?
4. Are you now ready to forgive yourself? Recall that forgiving yourself may take time and that you may never feel ready. Take the time to write down the things you need to forgive yourself for and then release them. If you are not yet ready to do this, what will help you get to that place?
5. If you have children, how do you think they may still struggle today from being exposed to domestic violence? Take the time to write down your thoughts regarding asking your children for their forgiveness. Remember, children are unique and may respond differently or need to be approached differently due to the sensitive and painful nature of this issue. There are no formulas. Just allow tenderness to be your guide when talking with them.

Prayer of Reflection

Jesus, please help me to understand the true meaning of forgiveness as You intended it to be. Clear up any confusion or faulty beliefs I have surrounding this issue. Give me discernment regarding the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. I read in Your Word that we are to forgive, but I also know that forgiveness does not mean I need to trust this person again or take him back. Enable

me to forgive and to surrender him into Your hands. You are my vindicator. You are my advocate. I realize that apart from You, it is humanly impossible to forgive him for the suffering he has inflicted. But with You all things are possible. Work in my heart so that I can begin this process of forgiveness.

Beyond forgiving my abuser, I ask You, Lord, to enable me to forgive myself. You are fully aware of my story. I do not have to explain myself to You, and I thank You for that. I want to be completely free. In order to be free, I must choose to forgive myself. My choice to be in this abusive relationship has hurt me as well as other people in my life. It hurts me to know this, but it also hurts me to hold on to unforgiveness toward myself. Help me, Jesus, to forgive myself.

Today, by an act of my will, I choose to forgive him (name of abuser), I choose to forgive myself, and I choose to forgive those (name them) who have misunderstood me and judged me without truly understanding my story. Thank You, Jesus, for the gift and example of forgiveness that You so freely gave to me on the cross. I receive Your forgiveness for myself as well as offer it from my heart to those who have hurt me.

And finally, Lord, please give me the sensitive discernment to know when it is best to approach each of my children to ask them to forgive me. I am no longer shaming myself for my decisions; however, I still recognize that my choices affected my innocent children. Hold them, Jesus. Heal them. Only You can use the pain they endured for greater good in their lives. Set them free to live their divine purpose with vitality and intention. Continue walking with them all the days of their lives keeping watch over them always. Amen.

God's Enduring Promises

O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive,
so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help.
(Psalm 86:5 NLT)

In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part. (Matthew 6:14–15 Message)

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. (Mark 11:25)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

And forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew
6:12 NLT)