

Seeking and Granting Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

SEEKING FORGIVENESS

When a person grants forgiveness, they are giving an incredibly precious gift to the person who has offended them. That's why it's so important for the person **seeking** forgiveness to ask for forgiveness with great thought, care and humility. The following is a brief outline of how a person seeking forgiveness should communicate their request.

1. Acknowledge that you have sinned against the person you have offended

Let the offended person know that you are very aware that what you sinned against him/her.

Example: *"I cut you off in mid-sentence as you were trying to explain what was bothering you.....That was wrong for me to do."*

2. Identify specific sins by their biblical name

Using specific biblical terminology, acknowledge that in your words/attitudes/actions you sinned against God and against the person.

Example: *"I was more concerned about telling you what I thought, than listening to what you had to say. In doing so I was **disrespectful, inconsiderate, unkind, selfish, and proud.**"*

3. Acknowledge the harm your offense caused

Acknowledge, AND show genuine remorse for, the harm/hurt that resulted from your sin.

Example: *"I am so sorry that for the many ways my sin impacted you. I didn't come close to treating you as God would have wanted me to treat you."*

4. Identify alternative biblical behaviors to demonstrate your repentance

Let the person know that you have thought through a more biblical approach than the one for which you are about to ask forgiveness.

Example: *"I should have listened to you carefully and respectfully as you were sharing what was on your heart. With God's help, and yours, I am going to actively work to become the kind of listener God wants me to be."*

5. Ask for forgiveness

Once you have done the previous steps, ask the other person to forgive you for your offense against them. In doing so, you "put the ball in their court."

Example: Will you forgive me?

GRANTING FORGIVENESS

Once forgiveness is sought, the offended person has a choice to make. Bluntly spoken, the choice is to obey God and forgive, or disobey God and withhold forgiveness. (See Matthew 18:21-35) This choice is made **EASIER** (not “easy”) when the person seeking forgiveness has followed the steps listed on the previous page..

In Ephesians 4:32, believers are instructed to “forgive *one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*” This is a powerful verse that tells us that in our forgiveness we are to follow the pattern given to us by **OUR FORGIVER**. As we forgive, we are essentially making three significant promises to the person who has wronged us:

Three Promises of The Forgiver

1. I will **not dwell** on what you have done and how it has impacted me.
2. I will **not bring up** what you have done **to use it against you**.
 - a. I will not do so with you.
 - b. I will not do so with others.
 - c. Any mention of the past offense will be for the purpose of helping the relationship.
3. I will **not let what you have done stand between us** or hinder our relationship.

THE RESULTS OF BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS

As the offender seeks forgiveness, and as the person who was offended grants forgiveness, the results are incredible!

1. **God** tears down the stubborn walls that sin has erected **between us and Him**.
 - a. The relationship between the **offender and God** is restored.
 - b. The relationship between the **offended and God** grows.
2. The relationship between the **offender and the offended** is restored.
 - a. The path is cleared for the relationship to grow.
 - b. The two can move forward, unhindered by the memories of past wrongs.

This is exactly what God wants for us. Isn't it what YOU want, too?

Primary Sources

- The Complete Husband by Lou Priolo.
- Unpacking Forgiveness by Chris Brauns