

# Forgiven to Forgive

**Step Eight – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.***

***Matthew 5:23 – 24 – So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.***

***1 John 4:7-10, 20-21 – Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God-for God is love.***

***God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.***

***If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar: for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters too.***

***Isaiah 53:3-7 – We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him—we ignored him as if he were nothing. "But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God. But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved. "He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word.***

The first part of Step Eight is embracing the pain of our lives and relationships instead of running from it. We embrace the pain by writing down what has happened and staying with the painful feelings as we allow the harm we have done, and the harm that has been done to us, to become clearly conscious. So much of our training is toward quick answers, quick prayer to get rid of the pain, not seeing that the pathway to wisdom and understanding does through pain. We learn that our pain is just that – pain. It will not kill us. As we stand in our pain we are frightened and it hurts, but by knowing God can teach us through it, some of us are losing our exaggerated fear of pain.

The second part of Step 8 is writing down beside the names of each person with whom we have a bruised relationship our own part in what happened. Some of the people who hurt us may have been trying to defend themselves (however unhealthy or abusively) against our controlling, fixing, advice giving, punishing, or interfering. Going back over the past this intensely is not going to be a way of life, but if we don't examine and experience the effects of the disease in our life and learn what behavior leads to the pain we continue to cause and experience in relationships, then it's hard for even God to change our selfish and abusive habits.

Finally, when we have looked at our list and lived with the feelings we had about what we did and what was done to us, we can become ready to do what we have to do to let go of our pain. Before going to make amends we need to gain humility and to release our pain and anger about what others have done to us. This comes through forgiving them. Humility is not fawning. Humility is an accurate estimate of ourselves. By seeing and experiencing the pain caused by broken relationships we see that we are not the smooth social operators we thought we were. We see that we are ordinary people whose self-centeredness causes pain and chaos.

Seeing ourselves with humility can allow us to forgive our friends and enemies who have hurt us before we go out to make amends and hope for forgiveness from those we have harmed. Forgiveness in this sense means simply that we release our need to punish, to get even, to make the other person apologize, or do anything. We release our need to continue to be hurt or be angry about what they did.

The main purpose of Steps 8 and 9 is to clean off our side of the street, regardless of the reaction of the other person to our amends. But, we are often so manipulative we want to couch our amends in a way that would almost guarantee that the people we have harmed would forgive us. We have to stop ourselves and simply become willing to just go to all the people we have harmed and make amends for the harm we have done.

Adapted from: Miller, J. Keith, **A hunger For Healing: The Twelve Steps As a Classic Model For Christian Spiritual Growth**, Harper San Francisco, © 1991

## **Questions For Discussion and Reflection**

- 1. Why does God think it is important to have good relationships with others?**
- 2. What has forgiveness of me cost God?**
- 3. What is my usual response to pain?**
- 4. How do I become aware of my part in relationships that have broken down?**
- 5. What is God's answer for letting go of my pain?**
- 6. Why is it important for me to have offered forgiveness to those who have wronged me before I go out to make amends with those I have wronged?**
- 7. What does Jesus have to say about all this in the "Lord's Prayer?"**