

Freedom Begins With Forgiveness

Written by Bill Perkins

Below is a nasty list of attitudes and actions people struggle with. Most of us not only battle to break free but to keep the battle a secret. Yet, if we're going to find freedom, we must first identify what it is we're struggling with. So take a moment and check out the list below. Do you see your captor there?

Angry outbursts, bitterness, envy, self-hatred, depression, despair, suicidal thoughts, immorality, gluttony, self-pity, control, fear, addiction, isolation, insignificance, victimization, jealousy, materialism, or something else.

Name Your Enemy

Now that you've named your enemy, how would you like to be free? Please note, I didn't ask, "How would you like to manage it?" I asked, "How would you like to be free of it?"

Maybe the question seems valid but the outcome ludicrous. After all, you've battled it much of your life without success. Or, maybe you've surrendered to its collar and figure you'll live the rest of your life at the end of its leash. Perhaps the thought of telling someone the extent of your struggle, and your most recent episode, triggers internal resistance.

The Truth Will Set You Free

As much as your history may contradict the following reality, it was Jesus who spoke it. He said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). He went on to say, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:34-36).

The freedom Jesus promised isn't a theological principle with no bearing in the real world. He promised to liberate us from the power of sin and Satan. Last week I talked about finding the root of a stronghold. If you haven't read that blog, please take a few minutes and look over it. Once you've read it, ask God to show you the root of your problem. If you don't get an answer, keep asking.

Who Do You Need to Forgive?

After you've prayed and received an answer, ask God who you need to forgive. If you suffered from a curse because a parent repeatedly called you "stupid" then they must be forgiven. If you suffered from the wrath of an angry father, then forgive him for infusing you with anger.

If you suffered from injustice, trauma, or an unhealthy tie to another person, ask God to forgive the person who hurt you. And then ask God to forgive you for your sinful response to the wrong you suffered. While your dad may have called you stupid, you're the one who allowed that lie to grow in your mind until it took over and defined you.

Forgive Yourself

Once you've done that, forgive yourself for believing the lie and acting on it. For many this is the hardest step. But you must take it.

A Transaction

Forgiveness is a transaction in which you release another person from a debt they owe you. Once forgiven they no longer owe you understanding, an apology, or restitution. They owe you nothing because you have forgiven them. And you will no longer seek to make them pay with unkind words or thoughts intended to hurt them.

Forgive and you'll feel a burden lifted. And you'll be one step closer to freedom. There is no other first step. No way to avoid forgiveness and find freedom. It is the first step . . . I pray you'll take it.