



What forgiveness isn't!

by Carmen Allen

Forgiveness is NOT...

☒ **saying – “It was okay that you hurt me.”**

We can be tempted to think that when we forgive someone, we're condoning their sin against us and saying in effect “I don't mind that you did that.” Forgiving someone doesn't imply that what they did was okay. It's only when we acknowledge that their actions were NOT okay that we can start the journey to forgiveness.

☒ **saying – “I probably deserved it somehow.”**

It's easy to blame ourselves especially if the perpetrator is blame-shifting and refusing to accept the consequences of their actions. No-one deserves to be hurt or treated unfairly.

☒ **forgetting it ever happened**

It's misleading to think that when you've truly forgiven someone, you will forget the incident. You will no doubt forget some things that you forgive, but not all.

☒ **blocking it out**

Trying to repress a hurt by refusing to acknowledge or deal with it will do you emotional and mental damage. If someone has hurt you deeply and you do not know how to forgive or handle the pain, seek professional help.

☒ **allowing yourself to remain in a situation where it is dangerous to your emotional, physical, or spiritual health.**

Forgiveness does not imply that you stay in a relationship where the perpetrator can

repeatedly hurt you. You can forgive AND place boundaries down at the same time. They are not mutually exclusive. Distancing yourself from unhealthy relationships can make you sad as you grieve the loss of what you hoped the relationship would be. But being sad doesn't make your decision to protect yourself, wrong.

☒ **a mushy emotion**

Forgiving someone will come at a cost. A cost for you. It requires strong character to forgive. Forgiveness is difficult. It's also not an emotion. It's a decision of the will.

Forgiveness is...

✓ **an act of mercy**

Letting someone off your hook. Whenever I hear someone say... "I will never forgive ... for what they did to me," I feel sad. Because I know that the injured person is planning for a lifetime of emotional pain. Choosing not to forgive is actually a choice to live with a hook stuck in your side, causing you pain. It's simply not worth it.

✓ **an act of grace**

Forgiveness is a gift – giving someone something they don't deserve.

✓ **an expression of compassion**

– realizing that their offence is no worse than your offences in God's eyes (see Isaiah 4:6)

✓ **showing unconditional love**

i.e. having no ulterior motives

✓ **a process of**

- ★ identifying loss and hurt
- ★ grieving for what could have been (lost dreams)
- ★ establishing boundaries in relationships
- ★ healing - it can take time to forgive

Why Forgive?

If you have a faith or belief in God, it helps to remember that God has forgiven you. Here's a verse that speaks of God's character toward us.

"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin." Exodus 34:6,7

If God has forgiven us for all our wrongdoing and failure to meet his standards, then who are we to withhold forgiveness from another person?

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

If hearing that God has forgiven you is something you've never heard of before, then please reach out to me for more information.

Some practical tips (learned from personal experience)

Not necessarily in any order:

- ★ Recognise that Jesus commands you to forgive. It's not an optional extra in the Christian life – it's a command.
- ★ Whether you choose to forgive or not, you can't undo the act against you. If you don't forgive, you'll remain locked in a prison.
- ★ Talk to God openly about the hurt, the pain, your broken heart.
- ★ Talk to God also about the grief of a lost dream, expectation or hopes (what "could" have been)
- ★ Find a Christian to pray with you (someone who is strong in God and who you know can keep things confidential)
- ★ Establish boundaries in your relationships and communicate those boundaries with others by becoming more assertive.
- ★ Change your expectations of others to what is reasonable and realistic.
- ★ Realise that forgiveness is an act of the will – not a mushy, good feeling
- ★ Know that forgiveness is a death experience. Jesus had to die to win forgiveness for us. You have to die to "self" and the "flesh" in order to forgive.
- ★ Resist the temptation to "rehearse the hurt". This won't do you any good at all, but will put your mind back in a place of pain.
- ★ Ask God for his supernatural power to enable you to show the gift of grace and forgiveness to others.
- ★ Realise that no-one can offend you unless you let them. Learn the skill of not accepting offense.
- ★ Trust that there is a just God in heaven who will one day judge all of us and hold us account for what we did and didn't do. But we need to remember that if we want justice for others, then we need to accept justice for ourselves.

You know you've forgiven when...

- ★ The thought of their wrong no longer evokes an emotional response from you.
- ★ You have lost the desire to "rehearse the hurt". (i.e. keep going over the pain in your mind.)
- ★ You have no desire to "pay them back".

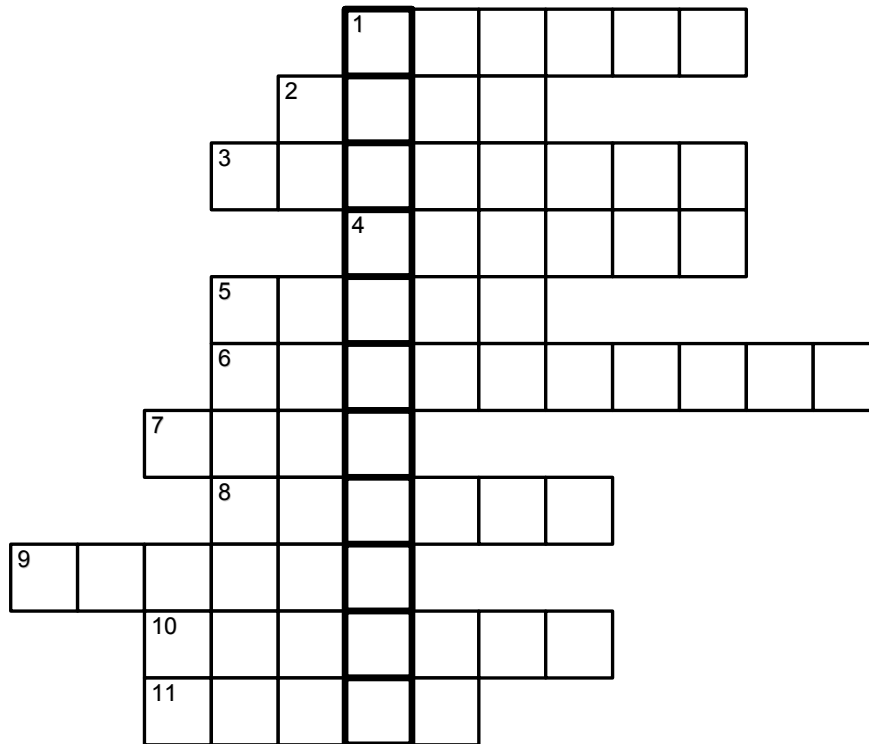
For your children

I hope you're able to take this information and teach it to your children at an age appropriate level. Even if you don't agree with all I've said, it may give you a place to start.

Here's a crossword puzzle (hint - the hidden word is "forgiveness") that you may want to do with your kids. It's out of my Activity Pack for Molly's Big Decision – available through my [webstore](#).

What did Molly learn in the Village?

Find the hidden word in the bold squares



The hidden word is:

The clues:

1. A person who runs a farm.
2. A small vehicle for travelling on water.
3. The day when someone was born or the anniversary of that day.
4. Made of gold.
5. A tall, narrow, pointed structure on the top of a building.
6. A written or spoken request for someone to go somewhere or to do something.
7. A sweet baked food made from a mixture of flour, sugar, and other ingredients (such as eggs and butter).
8. A type of animal that is closely related to apes and humans and that has a long tail and usually lives in trees.
9. The official home of a king, queen, president, etc.
10. A task or job that someone is given to do.
11. A piece of clothing for women or girls that covers the top half of the body and hangs.