

Experiencing God's forgiveness is like crossing the English Channel. For a duration, the rough seas can make you feel nauseous until you reach the other side. Then suddenly, the calm waters will restore you to feeling much better. This week, Dr. Graham Twelftree talked about experiencing that forgiveness in his sermon, "Enjoying God's Forgiveness" which is part 5 of the 6 part series "To Forgive Divine." Dr. Twelftree stated, "To experience God's forgiveness is the most valuable and life-changing gift we can ever receive."

Jesus pointed to this life-changing gift when He healed a man who could not walk. First, He forgave his sins, then He healed him. He told him that it was his faith that made him well. This demonstrates the importance of God's forgiveness. In her book *Forgiving the Unforgivable: Overcoming the Bitter Legacy of Intimate Wounds*, Beverly Flannigan says, "The unforgiving and unforgiven person may, like a thirsty person with a parched tongue, need forgiveness not for physical survival but for survival more intangible." Christ not only brings you a physical healing, but a deeper healing of forgiveness as well.

What is forgiveness? God's forgiveness is being reconciled to Him because He deals with our sin. Romans 5:1 states, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). Dr. Twelftree told a story about a Pastor who had a daughter that drifted away from the family. For two and one half years the father prayed for his daughter, until one day while upstairs shaving, the father was informed that his daughter was downstairs. The father went downstairs where the two were reunited. The daughter's action and the father's acceptance had reconciled them. The daughter accepted the forgiveness and was able to enjoy being forgiven.

God wants you to enjoy His forgiveness. First, you must accept responsibility for your sins. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, we can trust God to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:19. You should accept God's gift of forgiveness for yourself and forgive others as well. Jesus told a story of King who forgave one of his servants a great debt. However, that servant went to another fellow servant who owed him a small debt, but he would not forgive as he was forgiven and had that servant imprisoned. When the King heard of this, he was angry and turned the first servant over to jailers to be tortured until he repaid all of the great debt he owed the king. God forgives you and He also expects you to forgive people who have wronged you as He has forgiven you for wronging Him.

In his book *Five Steps to Forgiveness*, Everett Worthington outlines the steps of forgiveness in the acronym "REACH:" Recall the hurt; Empathize; Altruistically give forgiveness; Commit publicly to forgive; Hold onto forgiveness. By replaying the hurt you felt (Recall), attempting to understand the one who hurt you (Empathize), giving forgiveness unselfishly (Altruism), making your forgiveness public (Declare publicly), and then embracing it for yourself (Hold ON), you can experience God's forgiveness.

In a video testimony, a congregation member told about how her family had endured a tragic crime that led to unforgiveness. She shared how her own life has been changed because she decided to forgive the offender in spite of the crime. God has a life-changing gift for you as well through His offer of forgiveness. Are you ready to enjoy God's forgiveness?