

This week, Pastor Sharon presents Part 4 of the 6-part series "To Forgive...Divine." Pastor Sharon begins by pointing out that the model presented to you by the Bible, to help find release from the things that hurt you in your past, is to practice forgiving others actively. If you do not learn how to do this, you risk allowing the resentment from your hurts to become a kind of quicksand that in which you can become mired. To be free from past pain, you need to cultivate the habit of being able to forgive and to release your hurts.

Pastor Sharon points out that Job, in the Old Testament, even in the midst of the his trials and troubles, even when he felt like the weight of the world was on his shoulders, even when those he counted his closest friends accused him wrongfully of deserving his woes, still chose to forgive these people and to pray for them. He could do this because he learned to forgive and to put the hurt they had caused behind him. Now, today, how can you learn to do that?

Sharon says there are several things you can do to learn how to forgive and to forget. Begin by being honest with God about the hurts you feel. Job was angry with God because Job felt wronged. His tone with God was accusatory, but unlike one of us, God just listened because He understood how Job felt. You too need to be open with God. Do not try to repress your hurt and pretend it is not there. Pretending you don't hurt won't help. Do not seek to express your hurt by retaliating against the other person for what they did. Revenge doesn't take away hurts either. Instead of repressing hurt or expressing retaliation, you need to confess the hurt to God so that you can move on. God wants to listen. To hold on to the hurt is to allow it to hold you captive in your memories. This "revealing" is the beginning of your healing.

Once you have expressed your feelings of hurt, you will find a new freedom to talk to others about it. You gain true perspective and it no longer looms large in your life. Next, you need to make the conscious decision to forgive the offending person. Forgive them for your own sake: it sets you free. Release your offender. This, too, is a conscious choice but one that does not require you to endorse or to approve of their behavior or what they did. Releasing someone is not the same as giving approval, and it is not the same thing as reconciliation. (Reconciliation requires effort on the part of both parties.) Choose to release them from your anger so that you can experience release yourself.

Complete this process of becoming free from the hurts you carry in your life by refocusing your life. Whatever you set your focus on is what you will find yourself drawn to. Focus on what God has for you.

Be willing to put your heart right. Reach out to God through Jesus Christ, God's gift to you for reconciling you to him. Now that you have reconciled to Him, you can face the world in confidence. Every step you take in the direction God is calling you is one step further from the old hurt. In time, the pain will be only a memory and forgiveness will be your way of life and freedom. Are you ready to go there?