

Have you ever been hurt by someone and struggled to forgive him or her? Of course, you have. Maybe it was through negligence, betrayal, or someone's addictive behavior. Maybe you were overlooked and not appreciated or recognized for your efforts. Whatever the case, everyone has been hurt by others and has faced their own challenges of letting go of the hurt. So what's the solution? With that question in mind, Pastor Andy begins the series "To Forgive...Divine," with the message entitled "When You Can't Say 'I Forgive You.'"

The Bible teaches us that there are two basic truths about people: sin is a problem for all people, and God offers us forgiveness for our sins. Ephesians 4:32 states, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave us." The word "forgive" is mentioned 143 times in the Bible, so it's obvious that God wants to make sure you understand the importance of forgiveness.

The basic idea of forgiveness seems straightforward, but there are four myths about it that Pastor Andy wants to clear up.

The first myth is that we are supposed to go back to the way things were. Paul considered John Mark unreliable because he had abandoned their ministry at one point. Ten years later, Paul spoke lovingly and kindly about John Mark and accepted him back. No doubt the great apostle had forgiven John Mark long before, but Paul was unwilling to take him back just as if nothing had happened. It takes time for restoration to happen after someone has hurt you or betrayed you.

Another myth is that forgiveness means there are no consequences. Sin and unfaithfulness always have consequences. When David knowingly slept with Bathsheba and had her husband killed, the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin. Although David begged for and received God's forgiveness, the consequence for David's sin was the death of the child born of the sin.

Also, some believe you should forgive because it's your Christian duty. Forgiving someone should not come out from a sense of duty but because that it is your nature to forgive. Are people happy on their wedding day because it's expected? No, they're genuinely happy. In the same way, forgiveness should be a natural part of your character.

Finally, many believe that forgiveness cannot take place without an apology. When Peter cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, Jesus didn't need Peter to apologize before he could heal the wounded man. In the same way, Jesus can heal you now of any hurt, regardless of whether you receive an apology or not.

If you have received God's forgiveness for sin, it would be a tragic shame to keep that gift all to yourself. What hurt are you holding onto? Whom do you need to forgive?