

I always feel that giving gifts helps to form a bond between people. When our grandchildren have a birthday, I never know what they would like, so usually end up giving them money so that they can put it towards what they are wanting at that particular time. It is not only a gift, but also, an expression of my love for them.



These thoughts about bonding with others turned my mind to gaps in relationships because of hurts that we have received. We can be hurt by things that others do or say. Taking things that have been said as an example, here are some of the reasons why we feel hurt:-

- ** Something has been said about us that is not true.
- ** Jealousy and envy can be the cause of hurtful things being spoken.
- ** The person was angry about something and was retaliating.
- ** The person was not feeling well and said something that was rather out of character.
- ** Others were told of something that had been shared in confidence.



You could probably think of other reasons to add to these.

The Bible teaches us to forgive others. This is very easy to say but can be an extremely difficult thing to put into practice. We know that it is something that we ought to do, yet, as human beings, forgiveness does not always seem to come naturally to us. I have known people who have not spoken to each other for years because they have been deeply hurt and the longer this goes on, the harder it is to become reconciled. I find it hardest to deal with something that has been said that is not true. On one occasion, when I was a teenager, I thought that it would be nice to go and visit someone whom I had always held in high esteem for a long time. I expected her to be pleased to see me, but, was greeted with, "Oh, you come to see me, as bad as I am." I was totally shocked and do not know to this day what I was supposed to have said about her. For years I felt a great resentment against that unknown person who had tainted years of my young life. The fact that the person was unknown to me put me in the helpless position of not being able to do anything about it. Often, it is not only what has been said that is difficult for us to handle, but also, being in a position of helplessness and not being able to control the situation. Added to this, none of us like to be thought of as bad person who would say unkind things about other people. Knowing why something hurtful has been said can often help us to heal the gap in the relationship, although of course, we do not always have that information.

70 x 7

When Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive a person seven times, the answer Jesus gave was, "Not seven times but seventy times seven." Now I am pretty certain that Jesus does not expect us to keep a count of how many times we have forgiven someone until we have done it 490 times, but expects us to forgive and forgive and forgive and..... Not easy. We might forgive twice or even three times, but after that we draw a line under the situation and break off the relationship.

In some ways forgiveness is like giving a gift to someone. It is more than a coincidence that the word, 'forgive' contains the word, 'give'. As in the giving of a gift, forgiveness brings pleasure to both parties; it is a sign of the love that exists in the relationship and it is a strengthening of the bond between them.



I would like here to use the illustration of an injury. If we receive a cut on our foot, the cut opens out and the two sides of the cut have to be drawn back together again with stitches. It is the same with a gap in our relationships through a hurt. The two sides have to be drawn back together again by forgiveness. This may take a long time

and a great deal of effort.

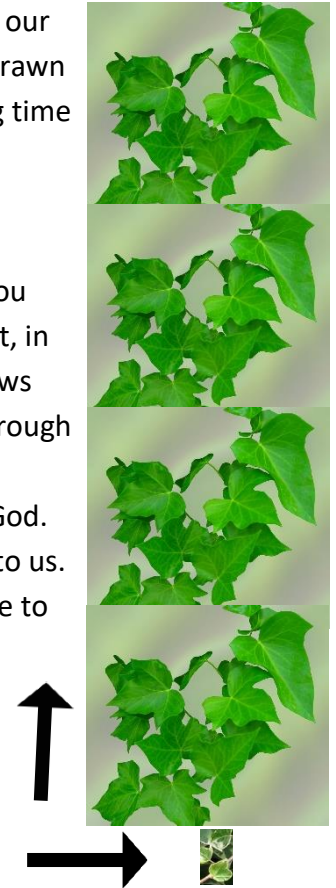
Why do we need to forgive? Can we not just forget all about it and try to put it behind us? No, because this unforgiveness forms a little root in our spirits. Have you ever tried to get rid of ivy in your garden? You think that you have dug it all up, but, in fact, you have missed a tiny little bit of it. After a while, up it pops again and it grows and grows! This is what happens when we have a bit of bitterness in our spirits through unforgiveness; it grows and grows and not only prevents us from properly forgiving the person in question, but also forms a barrier between ourselves and God. This in turn prevents us from receiving the full blessing from God that is available to us. God is able to help with the stitches and heal the gap – Just ask Him! You may have to work at it but the end result will be well worthwhile as you will have renewed a broken relationship and stopped the ‘ivy’ from growing again.

Related Bible passages:

70 X 7 Matthew 18: 21 – 22

Root of bitterness Hebrews 12: 12 – 15

Forgive Luke 17: 3 – 4



Forgiving

Others

Reasily

Gives

Intant

Valued

Enjoyment



To forgive others is to
free yourself