
Self Forgiveness

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Self-forgiveness can be deeply challenging, especially when we feel we've let others down, hurt people, fallen short of our own standards, made a mess of something, or committed a sin. The Bible doesn't use the phrase "self-forgiveness" directly, but it speaks profoundly about God's forgiveness, grace, and how we should respond to His mercy, including letting go of our own guilt and shame.

Self-forgiveness is a process that takes time, patience, and faith. But we can ask God to help us with forgiving ourselves and moving on, it can be hard and at times can be something we may struggle with, especially if your sin or mistake has caused someone harm, made them stumble, or has affected our relationship with them or others. But God has recorded in Romans 3:23 informing us we have all sinned and fall short of the Glory of God, and in Psalms 103:12 it says God removes our sin as far as the east is from the west, which is an immeasurable distance.



As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalms 103:12 (KJV)

We need to remember that God never gives up on us, even when we falter, as He is a God of compassion and comfort. In Isaiah 41:10, He says do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand, and in Lamentations 3:22, He explains that due to His great love for us His compassion never fails, plus in Hebrews 13:5 He tells us he will never leave or forsake us. Our Heavenly Father understands our struggles as we navigate our journey and is close to the broken-hearted and renews our strength.

Sometimes we feel unworthy of God's love and care, and we must remind ourselves that feeling unworthy of God's love is from a human perspective, and it's not reality. As we are his children, He loves us, even though we are sinners. We need to remind ourselves, we are precious in God's eyes, as it says in Luke 12:7, we also are told that the very hairs of our head are all numbered.

No matter how far we stray, how broken we feel, or how many mistakes we make, God never gives up on us. His love is unending, His commitment is unbending, and His presence is unswerving. Even in our darkest valleys, He walks beside us. When we stumble, He lifts us up. When we lose hope, He reminds us that He will uphold us. God's love isn't based on our perfection. It's based on His promise of everlasting life.

Why should we practice self-forgiveness?

We need to remember, God sees all sin the same, there is not one sin greater than another, and the bible refers to all manner of sins even murder and adultery and God forgave those who committed these sins if they were repentant. James 2:10 says for whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. This is saying that God does not distinguish between greater and lesser sins, all sin is the same in His eyes.

Forgiveness also helps us as it can bring us peace, happiness, and improve our emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing, and help us to heal. It can free us from the bitterness, resentment, and anger that the situation may have caused us. When we hold on to our hurt, we are emotionally and cognitively hobbled, and our relationships suffer, and we become prisoners of our feelings and emotions.

We often talk about forgiving others, but sometimes the hardest person to forgive is the one staring back at us in the mirror. But if we've received God's forgiveness, then we're called to extend that grace to ourselves too. We are told to love our neighbours like ourselves, Mark 12:31. But how can we love others if we're holding ourselves hostage with unforgiveness?

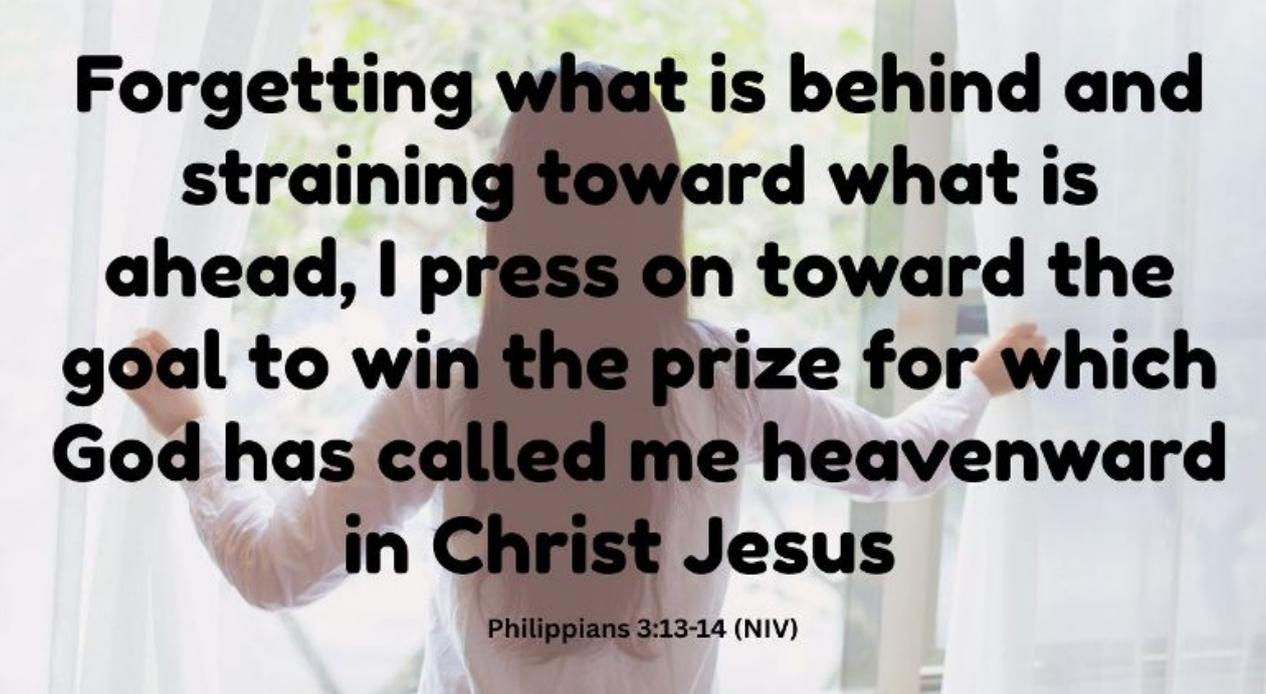
Moving forward and letting go

We need to forgive ourselves because that is what God desires for us, we need to move beyond guilt and condemnation, this involves not dwelling on past mistakes and replaying our mistakes in our minds, but focusing on God's grace and mercy, trusting in His promise that He forgives those who confess their sins, which sets us free from the grip of guilt. We can move forward with our lives. God instructs us to let go and place everything in His hands, we need to give our burdens to the Lord and trust He will take care of them. If we truly believe that God has forgiven us, why should we dwell in our own inability to forgive ourselves?

In Philippians 3:13-14 we are encouraged to focus on the future and to let go of our past mistakes and not to dwell on them, instead, learn from them and focus on moving forward in a way that reflects God's love and forgiveness, so that we can press on in our journey towards the coming of our redeemer. In Isaiah 43:18-19, Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. God has something new for you and me, and He wants us to look forward, to see what He's got planned for us. Letting go doesn't erase the past, but it releases us to embrace God's grace and our future.

Our worst chapter in our life doesn't have to be our last, we can create a different chapter by forgiving ourselves and moving on. The Bible is full of people who had terrible chapters but went on to write new ones with God's help, e.g., Moses the murderer became the great deliverer, Peter the denier became the bold preacher, Paul the persecutor became the great apostle. Your past doesn't need to affect your future.

Forgiving yourself doesn't mean ignoring what happened, it means learning and moving forward with God's grace.



Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus

Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)

1st step for self-forgiveness

Our first step to self-forgiveness needs to be to acknowledge, admit and confess our sin to God and ask for forgiveness, with an open and honest heart, without making excuses, this step opens the door to forgiveness and healing. In 1 John 1:9, it states if we confess our sins, God that is all faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. God doesn't just wipe away the record of sin, but He also cleanses our hearts. If our sin has hurt someone else, if possible, make amends, as asking them for forgiveness shows that you do want to move on and change.

Instead of looking inwards for forgiveness and release from our guilt and shame, we need to look outwards to God. We need to accept God's forgiveness, as His forgiveness is not based on how bad the sin was, but on how good His grace is. If you've genuinely confessed and turned to Him, you are fully forgiven.

When John in Matthew 3:2 tells us to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near, he is meaning more than just saying sorry but turning away from sin and making a real change in our life, when we ask God for forgiveness, we also needed to show a change in our life.

When God forgives us, we must then forgive ourselves, as holding onto the guilt of our sin stops us growing and keeps us living in the past. Holding onto guilt can make life destructive, when we keep ourselves stuck in shame instead of walking forward in the grace of God.

Christ died for our sins

If the high God of the universe who is perfect, pure, and holy can forgive us, shouldn't that be enough? Who are we not to forgive ourselves? Holding on to guilt after confession is like saying Jesus' sacrifice wasn't enough. He is the righteous one, while we are unrighteous. When God has forgiven us, we need to accept God's grace, mercy, kindness, and compassion, so that we can live with freedom and love, reflecting the kindness received by God. We need to believe God has forgiven us, so that we are not saying that the sacrificial death of Christ was insufficient for our sins, that He was not enough to satisfy the wrath of God. We need to remember Christ died to set

us free. We need to accept God's forgiveness and focus on living a life that reflects His grace and love.

Scripture reminds us that when God forgives, He removes our sins "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12) and remembers them no more (Hebrews 8:12). To continue holding them against ourselves is to deny the completeness of His grace. We may say, "I know God forgives me, but I could never forgive myself." Yet when we refuse to accept His forgiveness, we are, in effect, declaring that our standard of judgment is higher than His. We are placing our verdict above the God who has already declared, "You are forgiven."

Clinging to guilt is like saying Christ's sacrifice was not enough for us, even though God has declared it sufficient for the whole world. To honour Him, we must believe His word, receive His pardon, and walk in the freedom He has provided. Anything less keeps us in chains He has already broken. His forgiveness is final and full, our part is to accept it and live in its freedom.

Learn from the lesson

We need to learn and grow from our mistakes or sin, as this can be stepping stones and lessons for our growth in faith and wisdom. God has a plan for our lives even through the difficult and challenging times, it allows us to trust that He is working in all things in our lives, including our mistakes and struggles, for our ultimate good. God can turn even our hardships and failures into something good and purposeful, He has a plan for us, and God's plan is purposeful, loving, and for our ultimate good.

In Jeremiah 29:11 it is recorded, "for I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future", and in Romans 8:28 - 29 we are reassured that God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. God can take what is broken and make it into something beautiful, nothing is wasted in God's hands. So, even the things that feel like setbacks can be part of our journey He has planned for us.

Practical steps for self-forgiveness

- **Acknowledge What Happened:** Be honest with ourselves about the mistake or failure, avoid denial, minimising, or excusing it.
 - **Take Responsibility:** Accept our part in the situation, realising that this one situation does not identify our whole identity.
 - **Seek Understanding:** Ask ourselves what led to the mistake: stress, poor judgment, lack of awareness, unmet needs, etc. This is not to excuse, but to understand, so that we can learn the lesson that God is providing for us.
 - **Learn the Lesson:** Identify what we can change going forward, so that we can turn the mistake into a stepping stone for growth.
 - **Make Amends (if possible):** Apologize or take corrective action if our mistake or failure, make amends with others, if possible, as even the smallest acts of reconciliation can bring closure to help with moving on.
 - **Release the Burden:** Through prayer, reflection, or affirmations, intentionally choose to let go of carrying the weight. Remind ourselves that God is a Father of compassion and comfort.
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- [Practice Ongoing Self-Compassion:](#) Replace shameful or self-attacking thoughts and replace them with kinder, truthful statements about ourselves. Be patient with the healing process, as it may take time.
- [Practice gratitude for God's Grace:](#) Instead of replaying past mistakes, pause and thank God for the forgiveness He has already given you. This reorients your heart from self-focus to God focus and remembering that Christ died for our sins. This makes you feel thankful and makes us realised how blessed we are.
- [Let Go and Move Forward:](#) Set small, positive steps toward living differently. Focus on growth, not perfection.

Summary

We come from different backgrounds, carry different burdens, and bear different scars, but in God's eyes we are all the same, even when we are broken, weary, and in need of grace. No sin is too great, no past too messy, no heart too far gone for God's love. God doesn't see status, appearance, or history, He sees when we long for redemption. No matter who we are or where we've been, we all need God's forgiveness and His mercy, and in Him, we are made whole.

When we give the weight of our past sins and regrets to God, He can release us from them, so you don't have to carry that burden forever. When God forgives us, we are being given a fresh start, which means we can forgive ourselves because God has already forgiven us. We need to remember, God fully accepts you despite your flaws. We need to let go of harsh self-judgment and embrace the new life God offers.

We need to learn what God wants to teach us through our journey and then go forward with our lives, showing by actions we are changed.

When your guilty thoughts creep in, remind yourself that Christ died for our sins, and that God forgives us, so we can move on.

We long for that day when sin will be no more, tears will be wiped away, and our hearts shall be filled with joy forever more.

Forget the former things do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)

