

Forgiveness Is...

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right).

Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000

Forgiveness is not...

- **Pardon, legal mercy or leniency**
- **Condoning or excusing**
- **Reconciliation:** You can come together again, but still not forgive.
- **Justification:** You can forgive, but don't have to believe their action was fair.
- **Forgetting:** Forgetting would leave you vulnerable to the offence again.
- **Balancing scales:** Getting back at someone is not the same as forgiving.
- **Letting time heal the wound:** Forgiving is active rather than passive.
- **Abandoning resentment:** We might let go to resentment, but still not forgive. Forgiveness is more than releasing resentment.
- **Possessing positive feelings:** We might feel positive towards an individual but still not have forgiven them.
- **Saying "I forgive you":** You can forgive without using these words and you can use the words without forgiving.
- **Making a decision to forgive:** It can involve a decision, but forgiveness is a process that takes time.
- **A quick fix:** Forgiveness takes time and progress will fluctuate.
- **Accepting what happened:** We can accept that facts of an event without forgiving the event. Forgiveness is much more than acceptance.
- **Moving on:** We may decide to move on without looking back and without forgiveness.
- **Accepting what happened knowing that God will punish the offender:** This approach focuses on justice. The justice may be out of your hands, but it is still justice.
- **Saying: "I have the satisfaction of not letting the person get to me"**
- **Letting the other person know how much they owe you:** This is a form of revenge and is using the misdeed or transgression as a weapon. This is not forgiveness.