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ON THE AIR



See your
enemies through
Jesus' eyes and
pray for God to
forgive them.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



INSIGHT FOR LIVING
MINISTRIES



The Lesson of a Lifetime

Trying to Forgive as We Have Been Forgiven

Throughout my six-decade journey of life, I have found Christ's command to forgive those who sin against me particularly challenging when they don't even attempt an apology. How do we not only choose obedience but also find contentment in such unfair circumstances?

It's essential to ask Jesus to help me cultivate more compassion for the person than anger. This compassion often comes after I have sought strength from the Lord to help me process the injustice inflicted upon me.

It also helps to make a conscious effort to reflect upon the life of the person who hurt me. Often, I gain a deeper understanding of his or her motivations, experiences, and struggles. I'm not saying that this empathy for them erases the pain etched upon my heart, but it helps free me from yearning for the emotional compensation of an apology that I believe is rightfully mine.

In Chuck's article, he talks about a powerful approach to forgiveness. He encourages praying for those who have caused us harm, as we forgive the same way Jesus has forgiven us. When we choose to embrace these biblical principles, Jesus helps us navigate the tumultuous waters of forgiveness and find hope and peace as we journey through life's challenges.

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“Father, Forgive Them”

Praying for Our Enemies with the Heart of Christ

by Pastor Chuck Swindoll

When you think about it, forgiveness makes no sense. When someone offends you, the reasonable thing to do, by instinct, is to retaliate. Even the score. Make so-and-so pay. Teach that person a lesson.

An eye for an eye makes sense. Especially when you feel betrayed. But forgiveness? Hardly. And yet, it's precisely the unexpected, contradictory nature of forgiveness that makes it so beautiful . . . so Christlike.

No one modeled the spirit of forgiveness better than Jesus. During the excruciating pain of His crucifixion—even as the soldiers were hammering the metal spikes through His wrists and feet—Jesus exclaimed,

“Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.”

(Luke 23:34)

Humanly speaking, the natural thing for Jesus to have done was pray for God's rescue. He had His Father's ear. A two-second appeal would have put “thousands of angels” at His disposal (Matthew 26:53). Instead, He felt sorrow and had pity.

The mocking crowd challenged Jesus to protect Himself. Even the thief next to Him scoffed, “So, you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!” (Luke 23:39).

But instead of calling on His Father to save Him, Jesus prayed to His Father to forgive the ones who were causing Him so much pain.

Now, you may be thinking, as I was when I first considered Christ's words of forgiveness, *No way could I have done that.* Who can ask God to forgive an enemy? Is it even possible?

Yes!

Praying for forgiveness for our enemies is possible, even when our instincts work against it. The Holy Spirit can help us rise above our feelings of pride, anger, and self-preservation. He gives us a deep and broad perspective, softening our hearts to extend Christlike love to all—even to our enemies who hurt us.

It's easy to love the lovely and forgive the forgivable. Christians are unique because of the One we follow. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Christians can love the unlovely and forgive the unforgivable. But how?

By following Christ's lead.

Here are a few clues in Jesus' prayer from the cross.

First, He prayed to the **Father**. In this painful moment, Jesus turned His thoughts to the Father. Rather than dwell on His misery, rather than brood on the injustice of the moment, rather than consider how He could get out of the pain and get even, Jesus immediately looked to the Father.

Second, He asked the Father to **forgive**. What does *forgive* mean? The early church martyr, Stephen, expressed it verbally while his enemies were hurling rocks at him: “Lord, don't charge them with this sin!” (Acts 7:60). Ask God to show your enemies mercy—the opposite of what any of us deserve.

Helpful Insights on Forgiveness

1. Pray to your Father in heaven.
2. Ask Him to show your enemies mercy.
3. Realize your own need for mercy.
4. Extend compassion for your enemy's blindness.

Third, He asked the Father to forgive **them**. Jesus prayed very specifically. He had the soldiers in mind. But, in a larger sense, the objects of His prayer were all sinners . . . including you and me. Sinful humanity put Him on the cross. Realizing our own need for the Father's forgiveness makes us humble. Humility helps us pray for our enemies who need the same forgiveness that we need.

Fourth, Jesus said, "**they don't know what they are doing**" (Luke 23:34). Jesus felt compassion for those blinded by sin. Our enemies will perish unless God opens their eyes, revives their hearts, and forgives them. The light of forgiveness is more effective at overcoming darkness than any retaliation.

It's very possible you have someone in mind right now who has hurt you. If so, pray through and reflect upon the Son's teaching and example. Don't trade punches. Instead, take pity. Have compassion. See your enemies through Jesus' eyes and pray for God to forgive them. I know it makes no sense. It's irrational. It's not natural. But that unexpected, Christlike contradiction is exactly what makes forgiveness so beautiful.

IFLM staff adapted this article from Pastor Chuck Swindoll's sermon, "Father, Forgive Them," in his series, The Darkness and the Dawn.

UPCOMING BROADCAST

Revelation

Unveiling the End, Act 1

Beginning Friday, February 23

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Be sure to grab the new set when Chuck's series on Revelation airs!

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Are You Ready for a Glimpse of the End?

Join Pastor Chuck Swindoll for a deep-dive into the final book of the Bible, starting with his series, *Revelation—Unveiling the End, Act 1: The Heavenly Stage*. In recent years, listeners have requested that we broadcast this teaching. Well, now is the time! Starting late-February, his 40-sermon exposition through Revelation will hit the airways.

While Revelation explains the end of the story, it also provides guidance and encouragement for your journey today. Gain a clearer understanding of this enigmatic book as Pastor Chuck walks you through each passage. Blending weighty truths with uplifting takeaways, you'll see Revelation like never before.

As John felt on the island of Patmos, you'll be left in awe of our great and sovereign Lord!

Testimonial

Let me emphasize, God knew what I needed right then. Marriage and financial problems began and ended every day, but God began filling me with life-giving words and wisdom to hold on. Then, in a crisis, I wrote to IFLM, and a counselor there wrote back with what started a healing process. Reading his letter at first, I was shocked because I was expecting sympathy. But he said, "Forgive!" I cried. But then I listened to the Lord.