

Touching Heaven – Touching Earth

Tuesday morning bible study on prayer with Cindy Smith

April 29, 2008 Session 8

Forgiveness-Essential Ingredient for Effective Prayer

I was researching un-forgiveness and I came up with some good insight from Lisa Fritscher on a website about forgiveness (www.forgiving.org/default.asp.) She says nursing hurts holds you back from fully being with others.... and guess what... including God! We need to ask God to keep us in a state of continual forgiveness and to help us keep short accounts. I do want to qualify that forgiveness does not include allowing the person the opportunity to hurt you again esp. in abusive situations where we must be removed to a place of safety. Forgiveness is not condoning or excusing the act or words spoken to you. Forgiveness does not mean you are entitled to restitution. Restitution is different from retribution. Retribution is the desire to damage the person who damaged you. If you achieve forgiveness of a person then your desire to damage him or her, should subside. Suing someone for way above the amount he stole just to make him suffer to pay you back is an example of retribution.

Forgiveness is a gift to yourself. By choosing to forgive (and it is an act of your will), you take back the personal power that was stripped away. You cannot be the victim if you refuse to be victimized. Continuing to hold onto anger and hurt feelings lets the original act work against you long after it was committed. Forgiving the offender, however, makes the statement that you are no longer willing to allow him or her to hurt you.

Forgiveness is a step toward moving on with your life. If you are strong enough to forgive, then you are strong enough to survive. This realization makes you more aware of your own authority, and actually makes you less likely to be victimized in the future. Forgiveness takes time: the natural immediate reaction to being wronged is a combination of shock, anger, pain and grief. This is as it should be for these immediate emotions give you the adrenaline boost necessary to do what needs to be done in the immediate aftermath. These are powerful emotions and may take time to subside.

Take as long as you need to work through these feelings. You cannot and should not forgive someone when you are still in shock and pain. Use available resources, acknowledge and accept your emotions and work to resolve them. Only then will you be ready to forgive. Forgiveness requires a conscious decision-strength is required to make the decision to forgive someone who has wronged you. You may not feel like forgiving because you still feel bitter and angry, but you can make the logical and intellectual decision to forgive. With time and practice, however, you will truly feel the forgiveness. Give yourself time and do not force your feelings to agree with your decision.

Forgiveness does not mean forgive and forget. Forgive and forget is an unrealistic ideal. After all... our memories are not selective. We remember all sorts of things, particularly those that cause strong emotional reactions in us. You will not forget what happened, especially, if it was severe, but you can let go of it. If you choose to maintain a relationship with that person that you have forgiven, you will need to move the forgiven act to the past. You cannot achieve true forgiveness if the act is brought up as a weapon in future arguments. You will never forget the act, but you must move past it. Remember that you also have committed acts that required forgiveness. Put yourself in the offender's shoes and allow empathy to guide your actions.

Forgiveness of yourself is important! Too often we are our own worst critic and are willing to forgive others but judge ourselves against much harsher criteria. It is impossible to truly love and forgive others until we learn to forgive ourselves. No matter what you have done in the past, you are a worthwhile and valuable person. God can redeem even the heinous sinner. You have a great side that people love and if you have truly wronged someone, attempt to make it right. Contact him or her and offer a sincere apology. Offer restitution if possible. Once that's done, it is time to forgive yourself.

Realize that you are a fallible human being who has made mistakes and will continue to do so. Recognize that you are doing the best you can with what you have. Forgive yourself for your weaknesses and mistakes, and then move on. It's all you can expect from yourself. Romans 3:23 says "we have all sinned and gone astray." Forgiveness is extremely difficult to achieve. Yet it is only through forgiveness that we can truly learn and grow. Accept both yourself and others as fallible human beings. Recognize that we are all the product of our past experiences and that we are all doing the best we can. Allow yourself to work through feelings of pain, grief and anger, but do not let these feelings consume you. Forgive the person, but not the act. Work towards forgiveness as an intellectual decision and allow your feelings to follow at their own pace. Get ready to receive an extra measure of grace from God, because as you take a step to reconcile and forgive, God will meet you.

What we want to do is take an inventory. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Are you ready to take one more step toward reconciliation? Does anyone have a testimony of the power and grace of forgiveness?

Let's talk about confession as it says in James 5 15b "Confess your sins to one another that you might be healed.-that is, admission as to fault or sin as a weapon of warfare. No it is not listed in Eph 6:10-18 as a part of our armor, but it should be because it is powerful in quenching the enemy's fiery darts. Once something that is hidden or covered over comes out, the enemy can longer use it against us-it comes into the light and there it can be dealt with in a Biblical manner. We can repent before the Father, renounce our involvement with sin as sin, break its power with the sword of the Spirit, cast it out nullifying the stronghold it had become and then bless and fill that spiritual space with God's word.

We want to take some time today to confess with one another any area which the Holy Spirit may indicate to you-is an obstacle to healing.