

Forgiveness Does Not Mean You Have To Trust Someone Again

Today's podcast is called, "Forgiveness Does Not Mean You Have To Trust Someone Again."

One of the most common misconceptions is that forgiveness & trust are the same thing.

I believe this is because so many people have been told that if they truly forgive someone, they should immediately trust that person again. If they hesitate, set boundaries, or remain cautious, they are often accused of being bitter, unforgiving, or lacking faith.

Yet, nothing could be further from the truth.

Forgiveness & trust are two entirely different concepts. Although they can work together in healthy relationships, one does not automatically produce the other. Understanding this difference can protect you from unnecessary guilt, repeated harm & toxic relationships.

Forgiveness is something God commands because it frees our hearts from the burden of resentment. At its core, forgiveness is releasing the offender from the obligation of making things right with you. It is choosing not to seek revenge or hold onto bitterness. Whether the offender apologizes, changes, or even acknowledges the harm is not what determines whether or not you forgive them. In other words, forgiveness requires nothing from the offender.

Trust is much different. Trust is not a gift that should be handed out indiscriminately. It is confidence that someone has demonstrated they are honest, dependable, & safe. Unlike forgiveness, trust depends heavily on the other person's actions.

A trustworthy person consistently tells the truth. They take responsibility for their actions. They respect boundaries. They demonstrate genuine repentance when they have done wrong, & work hard not to repeat the behavior that caused pain. Over time, those consistent behaviors allow trust to grow. Without those qualities, trust has no solid foundation.

The distinction is reflected throughout Scripture.

Although Jesus taught us to forgive, He never instructed us to ignore wisdom or pretend dangerous people are safe. In fact, in Matthew 10:16 in the Amplified Bible, He said, ***"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be wise as serpents & harmless as doves"***. Wisdom includes recognizing patterns of behavior & responding appropriately.

The Apostle Paul also demonstrated healthy discernment. After John Mark abandoned Paul & Barnabas during one missionary journey, Paul later refused to take him on another trip according to Acts 15:36-40. Paul was not acting out of bitterness. He simply recognized that trust had been damaged & had not yet been rebuilt. Forgiveness did not erase the consequences of previous behavior, & that principle still applies today.

If someone repeatedly lies, manipulates, abuses, betrays, or violates your boundaries, forgiving that person does not require giving them unrestricted access to your life. In fact, doing so without evidence of lasting change is not an act of love. It is an act of foolishness that exposes you to further harm.

Proverbs repeatedly encourages wisdom & discernment. Wise people pay attention to patterns rather than empty promises. Genuine repentance produces lasting results, not merely empty words or temporary improvements.

If someone sincerely desires to rebuild trust, they must understand that it takes time. They cannot demand trust simply because they apologized or because you forgave them. Trust grows slowly through consistent, trustworthy behavior over an extended period.

If they become angry because you are cautious, that response itself reveals they are still focused on getting what they want rather than repairing the relationship.

If you have struggled with feeling guilty for maintaining healthy boundaries after forgiving someone, remember God calls you to forgive, but He does not call you to ignore wisdom. You can release someone into God's hands while also protecting the heart He entrusted to your care.

Forgiveness reflects God's grace. Wisdom reflects God's truth. Both have an important place in the life of every believer.

Thank you for listening to my podcast!