

DOES FORGIVENESS STILL WORK?

Forgiveness is the gift of not taking personal things personally.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ In Matthew 6:12, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” showing that forgiveness is not optional—it is expected.
- ❖ Peter once asked Jesus, “How many times shall I forgive... up to seven times?” (Matt. 18:21). Jesus replied, “not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (v. 22), teaching that forgiveness is not limited.
- ❖ Peter’s question was not merely theoretical. In Jesus’ time, tax collectors like Matthew were seen as traitors—people who exploited their own. Yet Jesus invited Matthew into close relationship. How do you forgive someone who has wronged you personally?
- ❖ Even more striking, Jesus forgave those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). So forgiveness is possible—but how?
- ❖ Stephen’s final moments in Acts 7 show us what forgiveness looks like in its most personal and painful form.

Offense is deepest when it’s personal.

- ❖ As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).
- ❖ Stephen was not only a servant in the early church, but a powerful witness. His boldness led to opposition, and eventually to his execution.
- ❖ This was not abstract suffering—it was deeply personal. The stones were real, and the rejection was real. Yet in that moment, Stephen called on Jesus.
- ❖ His prayer reveals a personal relationship with God. He was entrusting his very spirit to the One he knew.
- ❖ Pain, whether physical or emotional, is deeply personal. Words, betrayal, and rejection can wound just as deeply as physical harm. Left unchecked, this kind of hurt can shape how we see others and ourselves.
- ❖ That is why Scripture tells us to guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). Our response to offense matters. If we are not grounded in what God says about us, we become vulnerable to being defined by what others do to us.
- ❖ When offense is personal, forgiveness must also be personal.

Genuine forgiveness is personal; it comes from the heart.

- ❖ Stephen’s final words were, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60).
- ❖ This was not a casual statement. It was spoken in the midst of extreme pain. Yet instead of responding with anger, Stephen chose forgiveness. His posture—kneeling and crying out—reflects something deeper than just the literal words.
- ❖ This was a heartfelt appeal to God. His focus was not on his attackers, but on the Lord.
- ❖ Stephen was following the example of Jesus, who prayed, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). Genuine forgiveness is not superficial. It comes from the heart.
- ❖ Forgiveness does not mean ignoring pain or removing boundaries. It means releasing the weight of the offense so that

KEY SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:59-60
(all scripture in NIV unless otherwise noted)

it does not take control of your life.

- ❖ This is why gratitude and perspective matter. When we recognize what God has done for us, it becomes easier to extend grace to others. Forgiveness often benefits the one who forgives even more than the one being forgiven.
- ❖ But forgiveness at this level cannot come from human strength alone.

Forgiveness is the gift of a divine view; it gives us rest.

- ❖ After speaking these words, Scripture says Stephen “fell asleep” (Acts 7:60).
- ❖ This language is intentional. It points not just to death, but to rest. Even in his final moments, Stephen experienced peace.
- ❖ This reveals a deeper truth: forgiveness is a gift from God. It is not something we manufacture through effort alone. It comes from seeing things from God’s perspective.
- ❖ Human instinct makes everything personal. But a divine view allows us to rise above offense. It enables us to release what we cannot control.
- ❖ Unforgiveness disrupts peace; it keeps wounds open and active. But forgiveness brings rest. It allows us to move forward without being held captive by what has been done to us.
- ❖ This is the power of the gospel. We could not restore ourselves to God, so He came to us in Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, He made a way for us to be forgiven—and to forgive.
- ❖ Forgiveness is not easy, but it is possible.
- ❖ It begins with receiving God’s forgiveness and extends to offering that same grace to others. When we see from God’s perspective, we are no longer controlled by offense.
- ❖ Forgiveness becomes not just something we do, but a gift we receive—and through it, we find rest.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Read Acts 7:59-60 and Luke 23:34. What similarities do you see between Stephen’s response and Jesus’ response, and what does this reveal about the nature of true forgiveness?
2. Stephen forgave in the middle of deep personal pain (Acts 7:59-60). What does this reveal about the difference between human forgiveness and forgiveness that comes from God?

PRAYER TIME
Lord, remind us daily of the forgiveness we’ve received so we can give it freely. In Jesus’ name.

Start-up: Is it possible to forgive someone and still feel hurt? What causes the hurt to linger? How does one address this?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2026

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week’s message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms)
- 💡 (New idea)
- 🗨️ (Think about)
- 👉 (Do this)
- ❤️ (Speaks to my heart)
- ➡️ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline

PRAYER FOCUS: Canadian political leaders: municipal, provincial, federal.

24-hour Prayer: Daily;

Daily Devotions: Monday - Friday @ 6:30 a.m. & 9:00 p.m.;

Departmental Prayer: Every **Thursday** (please check schedule)

Corporate Prayer: Every **Friday @ 7:00 p.m.** (and in person every second Friday @ 9:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m.).

Zoom ID: 898 3191 5909 **Phone Access:** 647-374-4685

FAITH SANCTUARY DONATIONS

To donate online, please go to www.faithsanctuary.com/give

For email transfers, please use donate@faithsanctuary.com



ANNOUNCEMENTS

24/7 PRAYER INFORMATION/FEEDBACK MEETING

Date: Sunday, April 12th, 2026

Location/Time: Upper Chapel @ 1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

This meeting will be for everyone involved in 24-hour prayer. Bring any feedback and/or questions. Training will also be available for those who need it. Please don't forget to bring the device you'll use for hosting/co-hosting on the Faith Sanctuary Zoom prayer line (e.g., laptop, phone, etc.).

Contact: Bro. Mike Allen

COUPLES PRAYER BRUNCH

Couples are warmly invited to join us for a sweet time of fellowship, connection, and prayer.

Date: Saturday, April 18th, 2026

Location/Time: Upper Chapel @ 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Registration deadline is Saturday, April 11th, 2026.

To register, couples can add their names to the sign-up sheet available at the Guest Services desk. For further information, contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Kim at stayconnectedmsg@gmail.com.



FAITH SANCTUARY WEEKLY SERVICES

Sunday Bible Study @ 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship Service @ 11:00 a.m.

(Listen via phone: 1-844-268-4848)

Monday Berean Bible Study @ 6:30 p.m.

(Zoom, Facebook, YouTube)

Wednesday Bible Study @ 7:30 p.m.

(In person and via Zoom)

Friday Evening Service @ 8:00 p.m.

(In person and via Zoom)

Life Group Meetings – individually scheduled
(see ushers for information)

FAITH FOUNDATIONS

GOD

We believe there is only one God: the eternal, holy, loving, all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent Spirit, creator of all (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 1:17; Leviticus 19:2; 1 John 4:8; Hebrews 4:13; Revelation 19:6; Jeremiah 23:24; John 4:24; Isaiah 44:24; Colossians 1:16).

GOD'S WORD

We believe the Holy Scriptures—The Bible—is God's true and complete Word to humanity, verified most notably through fulfilled prophecies concerning Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Isaiah 41:21-23, 42:8-9, 46:9-10; Luke 24:25-27; John 17:17).

GOD'S CREATION

We believe all people were created in the image of God for His pleasure, to be His children, His church and His bride, living in eternal love and fellowship with Him (Revelation 4:1; Genesis 1:27; John 1:12-13; Romans 8:16; Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 19:7).

HUMANITY'S FALL

We acknowledge that we have all sinned and failed to fulfill God's plan and purpose for our lives, through willful disobedience to the word of God and our own conscience. All sinful acts lead to separation and alienation from God's pure, holy presence, eventually resulting in both physical and spiritual death (Romans 3:23, 6:23a).

THE GOSPEL

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Almighty God, fully divine and fully human (1 Timothy 3:16). He came to Earth and suffered death by crucifixion, willingly substituting Himself for us in receiving God's judgment against sin (Isaiah 53:5). But God raised Him from death (Acts 5:30), and He now offers eternal life to all who will believe in Him (John 3:14-17, 6:29; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 6:23b; Ephesians 2:4-9). Faith is sparked within us when we hear the gospel, the "good news" that Jesus died, was buried and rose from the dead for our benefit (Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

OUR FAITH RESPONSE

Hearing the gospel is intended to lead us to repentance, a divinely inspired change of heart that causes us to turn away from our sins and turn to God (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). Faith and repentance lead us to obey the scriptural command to be baptized in Jesus' name for the forgiveness of our sins and to receive His gift of the Holy Spirit. His Spirit gives us the power to live a righteous, godly life, joyfully sharing the good news of our new life in Christ with others (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 4:12; 1 Peter 1:22-23).

CHRIST'S RETURN

We believe our Lord Jesus Christ will soon return to Earth to receive His people to Himself and establish His righteous, eternal kingdom (John 14:3; Matthew 25:34).

APRIL 12, 2026

Faith **SANCTUARY**

Feed Canada to Feed the World

Reaching the World Through Prayer

~ 2026 ~

Pastor:
Rev. Adrian W. Peel

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

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