

# Forgiveness Brings Freedom

**Matthew 18:21,22; Luke 6:37; Ephesians 4:32**

A lot of books have been written on issues surrounding human relationships. It's likely that scores of articles have been created and sermons preached on this vital theme as well. Undoubtedly, many of those resources have helped people whose relationships were shattered by hurt and misunderstanding. Yet after all the pages have been read or sermons listened to, the crux of the matter often lies in saying the powerful but sometimes very difficult words, "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you."

Paul echoed this sentiment in Ephesians 4:32, as we urged the Ephesian believers to...

**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,  
just as in Christ God forgave you.**

Paul's words imply that forgiveness often was necessary among people he knew. And this reality hasn't changed over the centuries, as issues can arise today that hurt and divide. If not dealt with appropriately, these issues may lead to permanent damage. Even when circumstances in these strained or broken relationships are very complex, the antidote to such hurts is a willingness to say we're sorry and to forgive.

Jesus highlighted another important healing dynamic in relationships. In Luke 6:36, He said, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Mercy recognizes that while hurt has been inflicted, forgiveness is needed for another's well being and perhaps our own. Mercy is particularly needed in times when offenses are repeated. Jesus also instructed us to forgive over and over again those who sin against us (Matthew 18:21,22). With His help we can achieve the level of forgiveness needed to bring healing and restoration.

**Why is it so hard to say, "I'm sorry"?**

**Describe how you felt when someone forgave you or you forgave someone else. What positive impact did this forgiveness have on your life? How can this experience help you offer forgiveness more freely in the future?**