

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT I AM REALLY FORGIVEN?

*In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (sins), according to the riches of His grace.*

*Ephesians 1:7 (HCS)*

The only way to truly know you are forgiven is to believe God's Word. God has forgiven you based on what Christ did, not on what you do. Jesus Christ was the perfect God/man who died that we might be fully and completely forgiven of all our sins (past, present and future). Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, not one sin was left out (except the sin of rejecting Him). When you trust in who Christ is and what He did, you receive the forgiveness His sacrifice provided. Apart from God's full forgiveness we could not have a relationship with Him and He could not come to live in us. Everyone in Christ lives in a forgiven state with God, 24/7. The Bible word for this is justification, which means God relates to us *just as if we had never sinned*.

*And when you were dead in trespasses (sins) and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses (sins). He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross.*

*Colossians 2:13-14*

*He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our offenses. For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is His faithful love toward those who reverence Him.*

*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

*Psalms 103:10-12*

One reason we question God's forgiveness is that we believe God has only forgiven our past sins and not our future sins. We mistakenly think that any new sins that we commit separate us from God once again and, therefore, assume that God is angry or disappointed with us. The truth is, when we receive Christ into our life, our forgiveness is a settled issue once and for all. The issue now is not forgiveness but understanding how Christ's life within us can set us free from sin's destructive power.

*For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!*

*Romans 5:10*

So, go ahead and receive it! Agree with God and thank Him for His complete forgiveness. This is where freedom begins. You either believe God that you are forgiven or you are saying that Christ's death on the cross was not sufficient to pay for your sins!

*I have swept away your offenses like a cloud; your sins like the morning mist. Return to me for I have redeemed you.*

*Isaiah 44:22*

## **I HAVE CONFESSED MY SIN SO WHY DO I STILL FEEL SO GUILTY?**

It could be you haven't really accepted the fact of God's *total* forgiveness. Maybe you believe that your past sins (before you accepted Christ) were forgiven but now it's like you're on parole with God. One mistake and you go back to being a prisoner (separated from God). The devil wants you to believe this lie so he can keep you enslaved to sin.

The truth is, since you gave your life to Christ, all your sins are already forgiven; past, present and future! God sees your entire life, from beginning to end. He is not shocked by your behavior! It's like my favorite movie that I've watched so many times. I know what is going to happen. Because I know it has a good ending, I just enjoy watching the movie. This is how I see God watching my life unfold. He knows the ending and He enjoys watching me mature in Him. We often beat ourselves up about our behavior and our sins. We feel burdened by the guilt and condemnation that we lay on ourselves! God has already seen and forgiven every sin.

*I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions, for My own sake;  
And I will not remember your sins.*

*Isaiah 43:25*

Another reason could be that you are basing your belief about God's forgiveness on your feelings rather than on God's word. Our emotions can't discern the truth from a lie. They just respond to what we think. It's dangerous to base truth on how we "feel". Feelings come and go, but God's truth never changes.

Make God's Word the final word on what is true about you and your sins. Agree with God each time you are reminded of your sins, saying something like this: "Thank you Lord that this sin of \_\_\_\_\_ was nailed to the cross and you paid for it completely. Thank you that you have forgiven me and you'll never hold this sin against me ever again."

*There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ has set us free from the law of sin and death.*

*Romans 8:1*

## **WHAT DOES GOD REALLY THINK ABOUT ME?**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. . . He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17, 21*

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place My Spirit within you . . .*

*Ezekiel 36:25-27a*

*And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

*Ephesians 4:24*

To fully answer this question we need to understand what it means to be a new person in Christ. A Christian is not just someone who has been forgiven and is going to heaven someday. A Christian is one whose heart and spirit has been changed and who has the Holy Spirit (Christ) living in them. When God looks at you, He always sees the child that He deeply loves and adores. He sees your spirit that is perfect and holy.

*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*

*Hebrews 10:14*

Do you know what this verse means? It means that your salvation and transformation are 100% God's work. We cannot boast one bit in our own efforts at being righteous and holy. Believing that God has made you righteous on the inside will free you to make the changes in your behavior.

So, put off the old beliefs you have about yourself and stop defining who you are by your behavior or feelings or by what others think. The truest thing about you is what God says. Freedom and transformation come from confessing (agreeing with God about) your true identity. Here are some other things God says about you:

### **Because I am in Christ and He lives in me, I am . . .**

God's child – John 1:12; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6-7  
One Spirit with Christ – 1 Corinthians 6:17, 19; John 17:22  
Deeply and unconditionally loved by God – John 15:9; Romans 8:38-39;  
Accepted – Romans 15:7  
Totally Forgiven – Colossians 2:13-14  
Of great value and worth – Matthew 10:30-31; 1 Peter 1:18-19  
Adequate – 2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Philippians 4:13  
God Masterpiece – Ephesians 2:10  
Perfect and complete – Colossians 2:10  
Free from condemnation – Romans 8:1  
Holy and blameless – Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22  
Never alone or forsaken – Hebrews 13:5b  
Indwelt by God's Spirit – 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19  
Precious in God's sight – Isaiah 43:4  
Safe and secure – Psalm 32:7; Isaiah 43:1-3  
Chosen by God – 1 Peter 2:9

So, how does God see us when we sin? The same way; He sees His righteous child who is believing a lie and is allowing sin to dominate his/her thoughts and behavior. He sees you as one who loves God but struggles with sin; He does not see you as a sinner, struggling to love God.

### **WHY CAN'T I STOP DOING THIS?**

*For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do. Now if I do what I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but it is the sin that lives in me.*

Romans 7:19-20

A friend of mine believes that she needs a man in her life to feel valued and loved. Her desire for man's affection has led her into all kinds of sexual sin. She loves God and she prays, but she cannot seem to stop or control her sexual sins/desires. She knows it is wrong and mistakenly believes that she should be able to control these desires and stop sinning, in her own strength.

A lie believed as truth will affect your life as if it were true – even though it's a lie (John 8:32).

You see, my friend not only believes that she needs a man's attention and affection; she believes she must deny herself this need. Only by replacing this lie with the truth that she is deeply loved and valued by God and by depending on Christ to be her source of love and strength can she begin to experience freedom from the temptation of sexual sin. If we could overcome the power of sin on our own, then Christ would not have had to come and die for us.

You see, our spirit is willing but the flesh is weak! You have a body, a soul (mind, will and feelings) and a spirit. Your spirit is NEW! However, you still have that old body and brain. It's been programmed to live the lifestyle that is ungodly...right?? Our old lifestyle, habits and beliefs are like a default program in our brain. Whenever we believe a lie or depend on our own strength (the flesh), the old program comes into play. My friend needs to realize that only Jesus can overcome the old program and set her free from indwelling sin. She needs to change her focus from trying to "not" sin to depending on Christ to live through her, moment by moment. The more she believes and experiences God's unconditional love, the less likely she will be to try to get her needs met through others.

Transformation doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. Sure we may mess up, but eventually, believing what God says about our identity and our purpose will make a difference in the choices we make and how we live. In the meantime, it's important to remember that God sees and knows your heart. Once you are His child, you are united with His spirit and nothing can separate you from His love or eternal Life.

One way you can know that your spirit has truly been changed, is by your new desires. Before Christ, you probably would not have even recognized your wrong behavior. But, now that Christ lives in you, you hate the sins with which you still struggle (Romans 7:19, 22).

*For in my inner self I joyfully agree with God's law. But I see a different law in the parts of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me prisoner to the law of sin . . .*

Romans 7:22-23a

You desire to be different. The problem is not that you want to do what is wrong, but that you think you can do what is right in your own strength. Only Jesus can overcome the power of sin that wages war against our mind (Romans 7: 17-25).

*For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it.*

Romans 7:18

Our part is to put **no** confidence in our flesh (our human ability). Instead, we are to trust in Christ who lives in us and through us (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

### **WHY DOESN'T GOD SET ME FREE?**

Do you believe that you cannot help but sin? God says that you are DEAD to sin and alive to Him! Many people believe that Christ died so they could be forgiven and go to heaven someday. But Christ's death on the cross also provides, for us, victory over the power of sin (Romans 6:6). To experience freedom from sin, we must believe that it no longer has a hold on us because Christ is our source of life and strength.

*For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin.*

Romans 6:6

*And I have been crucified with Christ; and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Galatians 2:20

God uses our weaknesses and failures to cause us to trust only in Christ and not in ourselves. Our trials and brokenness lead us to realize that we cannot do this life on our own; we are not

complete or capable, apart from Christ! As followers of Christ, we need to experience problems in order to bring us to the place of total surrender and dependence on Christ as our source of life. Everything we see as a problem, God sees as an opportunity to draw us to Him. God is more concerned about our relationship with Him than about our performance.

*But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me.*

2 Corinthians 1:9

## **WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER MY PRAYERS?**

God always answers our prayers. Sometimes the answer is *yes*, sometimes *no*, and sometimes *not yet*. God always answers with a *yes*, when we are asking for what He wants and He always wants what is best for us. Prayer is not about our changing God's mind. It's about God changing our mind so that we are in agreement with what He says is good and what He is doing.

I went through the drive-through with my kids and they were starving. We ordered some French fries, but when the order came, the fries were too hot to eat right away. The kids were screaming and crying, "Why won't you give me the fries? I am starving Mom!" I knew that if I gave them the fries they could be hurt, not helped. When they cooled down, I passed them out. Maybe we haven't gotten an answer to our prayer because the French fries are just too hot.

## **WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM ME?**

The first and most important thing God wants is a relationship. Christ died for us to restore our relationship with God. With our sins paid for and taken out of the way, God puts His Spirit into us so that we can know and relate to Him 24/7. God desires an intimate relationship; one built on love and trust. He desires that we know Him as He truly is (John 17:3).

The second thing God wants is for you to depend on Him as your source for everything you need. You see, Christ gave His life *for* us, in order to give His life *to* us, so that He could live His life *through* us. **All** God desires from us is our *willingness* and *availability* so that He can express His life through us, as us. Your part is to simply take Him at His word (FAITH) and act on the fact that He is **your** life; your source of love, wisdom, righteousness, joy, peace, power, etc.

I am a mom of 3 children. I have loved each one of them intimately and personally from the time they were born. I want to have an individual personal relationship with each one of them. Some days I want to scream and we have hard days. At the end of the day, my love for my kids hasn't changed, in fact, it has grown. This makes me think about how God's love for me is so much greater and how He as my Father wants a relationship with me. Unlike me, God never loses his patience. He sees our intentions and is not frustrated by our immature behavior.

## **HOW CAN I BE FREE?**

Believe that you already are free because God says so. Romans 6:6 says that our *old self* **was** crucified with Christ and that we have been freed from sin. It goes on to say that we are to count on this truth: we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Our believing this doesn't make it true. Our believing that we are dead to sin simply allows us to experience it. We have already been set free from the law of sin and death. We simply need to agree with God about this in our thoughts. Any thought that is to the contrary, is a temptation from the enemy. Believing His lies brings us into bondage in our *experience* (not in our identity) and believing the truth is what sets us free (John 8:32)!

Imagine that you have been locked up in prison for ten years. The day comes that the guard unlocks the prison door and tells you that you're free to go. But, it's scary to think about living in total freedom! Or maybe you just don't feel worthy. The gate is open and you can leave, but, instead, you shut the gate and stay in the prison! God has set you free – the gate is open. Will you step out in faith and trust God to live through you in your new-found freedom?

## HOW DO I STOP LIVING OUT OF MY HURT?

Because we live in a fallen and broken world, all of us have been hurt by others and by life's experiences. However, it is not our past that defines us, nor does it determine our future. Since we were crucified, buried and raised up with Christ, His history is our history and His future is our future. We no longer have to continue focusing on the hurts of our past. Our identity is not based on how others have treated us, but on what Christ did for us. Because Christ lives in us, we can forgive those who have wounded us. Whatever they did cannot harm us because our life is hidden in Christ. When we don't forgive we only prolong our pain and make matters worse. Forgiveness is primarily for our benefit.

Forgiveness means not demanding that a person pay or make up for the wrong that they have done to you. Forgiveness cost God the death of His Son. God's forgiveness is a gift we did not earn or deserve. Christ Jesus died on the cross to sufficiently pay for all the sins of the whole world. Jesus paid for all sins - those offenses between us and God and those sins between us and others. Since we've been forgiven, we are to pass forgiveness on to others. Forgiveness costs us all our demands that the person "pay for" or make right the wrong done to us. Forgiveness costs us any blame or judgment we might hold against them.

How to forgive:

- 1) Recognize and receive God's personal love and forgiveness for you. (1 John 4:7-11, 16-19).
- 2) Write down a brief description of the event or offense. List each person who contributed to your hurt and the wrong you suffered from them.
- 3) Recognize that Christ is Lord, He is in control and thank Him for using even the most hurtful events in your life for your ultimate good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28, Ephesians 1:19-23)
- 4) Ask God to give you His perspective of the person. What is most important is not who or what offended you, but that you respond correctly to the situation or person. (Philippians 2:14-18; 4:4)
- 5) Recognize that bitterness is assuming a right we don't have. Confess any sinful responses on your part. (Romans 12:17-20)
- 6) One-by-one, verbalize to God your decision to forgive each person. Yield your "right" to punish the person in any way. Trust God to deal with each one as He thinks best. By faith, (not feelings) choose to cancel their debt. Verbalize this choice to God. For example:  
  
*"Lord, I choose to forgive, by faith, (name) for (offense). I trust You to change my feelings and wrong thoughts in Your time. I trust You to work this wrong done to me out for my good, in Your time. Thank you Jesus for freeing me from this offense and for healing my pain. Amen. Repeat this as necessary.*
- 7) When you have completed working through each offense, write "PAID IN FULL" across your list and destroy it.

- 8) Cooperate with God in healing the offender's life by returning good for evil (1Thessalonians 5:15; Romans 12:21). Ask God to help you see them the way He does and empower you to love them, unconditionally (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-38).
- 9) Thank God for each offense. Discern what benefits and character qualities God wants to develop in your life through the offense. (1 Thessalonians 5:18, Galatians 5:22-23).

## **I'VE CONFESSED, NOW WHAT?**

Bringing your sin into the light is the first step in coming into agreement with God. What does it mean to come into agreement with God? It means that we agree with God on these points:

### **1. It means to agree with God about why your particular sin is wrong.**

We agree with God that our sin is exactly that – sin! What is sin? It is missing the mark – the failure to reflect God's love to others. It is living our lives independent of God.

### **2. It means to agree with God that this sin was nailed to the cross and God has totally and completely forgiven you. \*\***

### **3. It means to agree with God that this sin does not define who you are.**

God determines our identity by our relationship to Christ. If we have trusted in Christ, our spirit has been made new and alive to God. Our human spirit is the deepest part of who we are and it allows us to know and relate to God, who is Spirit. Before coming to Christ, our spirit was dead to God and alive to sin. Now that we are in Christ, our spirit is dead to sin and alive to God. It has been made perfect and complete through Christ.

We can't just agree with God on the negative things – our sin and all the bad stuff. We have to know the promises; what God says about you and who you are as His child. **Let's get into agreement with God....**

- I am a new person in Christ! (2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24)
- I am dead to sin and alive to God! (Romans 6:11; 8:2)
- I have the mind of Christ because His Spirit lives in me. (If you know something is wrong, it is God in you shining a light on what you are doing! Thank Him for giving you His mind and ask Him to guide you next time you are confronted with this sin/situation. Then, LISTEN and RESPOND!)
- I am a **victorious overcomer** – Through Christ I have already overcome this SIN! My body and mind might be still struggling with it, but this is NOT who I am in Christ! (1 John. 4:4, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 2:14)

### **4. It means to agree with God that Christ has set you free from sin and made you a slave of righteousness.**

We agree with God that He is using this to grow us up, as well as, bring us closer to Him. The moment we became God's child, **He gave us all that we need to live free from sin's destructive power!**

### **5. Agree with who God says you are in Christ.**

The truest thing about us is what God says. Not our past or our behavior. Not what others think or say about us. Because our spirit has been joined to Christ, we have been given His righteousness. Our spirit is always in agreement with God and desires to do right. Jesus said, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Our "flesh" is our old way of doing life in our own

strength. We are not to judge our self or others by their flesh. Everyone in Christ is a righteous and holy person.

6. **Confide in someone about your struggle and ask them to pray in agreement with you concerning your freedom.** Ask this person to keep reminding you of your decision to agree with God about who you are and your freedom in Christ.
7. **Seek to grow in the knowledge of God's grace and all that is yours in Christ.** This can be done through the personal study of God's Word, by reading books or listening to messages that focus on your new identity in Christ, and joining a LifeGroup that will encourage your spiritual transformation.