

SELF-FORGIVENESS

You are a product of your past, but you don't have to be a prisoner of it! When you refuse to forgive yourself, you're making a decision to be miserable for the rest of your life. (Eph. 1: 5-6).

-It's not just about you! Misery loves company. When you keep beating yourself up, your loved ones get beaten up too. It's inevitable, because when you wallow in guilt you're more withdrawn and critical, and less open and affectionate.

-Your mind affects your body! Doctors say that unforgiveness generates chemicals that directly affect your vital organs. They increase your heart rate, raise your blood pressure, disrupt your digestion, tense your muscles, dump cholesterol into your bloodstream and reduce your ability to think clearly.

-You get stuck in the past! God, said, 'To every thing there is a season...' (Eccl. 3:1). Once you've repented and been forgiven, the season of regret is over.

NOTE

It's particularly hard to forgive yourself:

- a). For failing at a major life task, like a marriage or career
- b). When your actions have hurt others
- c) When your lifestyles has hurt you
- d) Not doing what you know you should have

Suggestions

- 1) *Confess what you've done!* Thinking you're 'unique' makes it harder for you to give yourself a break. Plus, confession stops you from slipping into denial. Once you've obtained God's forgiveness, go all out to serve Him and get support from a trusted friend. David said, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed' (Psalm 32:3-5).
- 2) *Hit the stop button!* Often it's the guilt and stress associated with remembering your actions that make you feel bad – not the offence itself. Your habitual reaction is the real problem. Continually revisiting your failures doesn't accomplish anything, it only offends a forgiving God. So, when you catch yourself doing it – hit the stop button and change the channel! Focus on the fact that God's forgiven you, then put it behind you.
- 3) *Replace your guilt with gratitude!* That's not hard to do – just reflect on God's goodness. Visit a hospital and rehab and be grateful for your health. When you look for them, you'll find lots of things to thank God for in your life.

Way Forward

'Let's ...search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord' (Lamentations 3:40)

Refusing to forgive yourself is like trying to drive your car with brakes on: it prevents all forward momentum. Here are some contributing factors:

- 1) *Unrealistic expectations!* We each have a set of subconscious rules about how we should behave. Let's look at the way we're living and reorder our lives.
- 2) *Feeling bad, instead of doing good!* If you fail the test, do something about it (2 Corinthians 13:5). Remember, '...those who help others are helped' (Proverbs 11: 25). The roots of happiness grow in the soil of service – so get busy!
- 3) *Getting things out of perspective!* Instead of telling yourself what terrific person you are, remind yourself of the good things you've done. If you can't think of any, begin making some memories.

Above all, keep these words in mind: 'When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down,' (Romans 5:20). That means regardless of how badly you've messed up, God stands ready to give you a fresh start.