



The Interconnection of Shame & Forgiveness

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When we find it difficult to forgive someone and choose to carry bitterness or strife in our hearts, we will eventually become weary. It's a valuable reminder that our souls are restless until we find our rest with God and that an unforgiving heart keeps us separated from God. Once we are able to experience forgiveness, we will find restored relationship with God, and He is glorified.

As we seek the Lord daily so that we can be transformed by Him, He calls us to have a forgiving heart. Ephesians 4:31 tells us, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."

If you have difficulty forgiving someone, ask the Lord to align your feelings with your decision to forgive in accordance with His will. Remember that forgiveness is an **active, not a passive** process, and we must take responsibility for our part of the problem. This is where shame enters in. Sometimes we find it difficult to forgive others because we are unable to speak the shame we feel regarding our contribution to the problem. Once we are able to unload and unburden ourselves of the shame we feel, we are only then able to experience God's grace and mercy and extend forgiveness to others. When we ask God to forgive us, we become closer to God and experience His presence.

The next time you feel bitter, stop and identify the things you need to forgive AND the things for which you need to be forgiven. Extend forgiveness and stop shame. Brene Brown, PhD, LCSW, international speaker and author on the topics of shame and vulnerability, offers the following process to overcome shame:

1. Talk to yourself like you talk to someone you love. (Would we say to our kids, "Gosh, you're so stupid!"? Obviously not, so why would we talk to ourselves like that?)
2. Reach out to someone you trust.
3. Tell your story, "Shame cannot survive being spoken," says Brown.*

Once we've taken the active steps to forgive others and remove the shame that blocks us from forgiving ourselves, we will begin to reap (remember, this is a process) the clear rewards of our labor – forgiveness and a transformational joy found only through relationship with God.

"If we heed our feelings of shame and confess our wrongs before God, His wrath will turn to favor and we will know forgiveness." Matthew 5:44

For more information on Ellen, [click here](#) to visit her counselor page!

*http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/08/brene-brown-shame-oprah_n_4059675.html