

## 4 Steps of Forgiveness

**These won't be easy steps, but they will bring freedom.**

Sometimes, says Fr. Jim Blount, there are spiritual realities at work that may be blocking us. Blount is an exorcist, devoted to a ministry of healing and deliverance. Sometimes there is no desire to forgive. Sometimes the desire to forgive is incomplete. Sometimes, even, there is a spirit of unforgiveness in the family. **In such cases it is necessary to ask God for the grace to want to forgive, for the strength and love to be able to forgive.**

But we can cooperate with God's grace in the process of forgiving. To that end, Fr. Jim recommends the following four steps of forgiveness in order to forgive utterly, completely and in a saintly manner:

### 1 Make an act of the will

The first step requires the will. Forgiveness begins with an act of the will. This is to say, we choose freely to forgive.

**Forgiveness is not based on feelings or emotions. It is a decision.** We can have any number of feelings or thoughts, but it is our will that determines forgiveness. It is a decision to do something, to commit oneself to let the past go. Thoughts and emotions help us to arrive at the right decisions, but it is ultimately our decisions that determine our lives.

We make the decision to forgive through the healing grace of Jesus Christ. We do as he says in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If we do not have mercy on others, we inhibit the mercy he promises to extend to us.

Just as Christ forgave his persecutors on the cross, we forgive others who may have harmed us. We can forgive anyone: parents and other family members, priests, teachers, or anyone else who has ever hurt us, but only through the grace offered by Jesus and by a firm commitment of the will.

To decide to forgive, make an act of the will with this prayer: "I forgive you, [Name], in the Name of Jesus Christ, now and forever."

### 2 Bless those who persecute you

In the second step, we bless those who harmed us. Here we return a blessing for a curse. Christians never return a curse for a curse; instead, we return a blessing.

It may be the case that the person who harmed me spoke a curse toward me; this is known as a "word curse." Word curses can be very powerful. Whenever someone in authority curses, it is harmful: a mother, father, husband, or older sibling. This also applies to employers or teachers. Those in power should use their lips to bless, but if they instead curse, it is diabolical. We have to reverse it. And we do so by blessing them.

This is the most important step to forgiveness. The anger and hatred of our wounds leave by the act of blessing. **Blessing melts the ice of the heart. Blessing releases the poison. Blessing heals the heart.**

The blessing we give should be rich and bountiful. By blessing someone, we declare that we want for them all that God wants for them. Blessing is an expression that another soul should know the boundless love of God and should receive God's mercy. After all, St. Paul teaches, "Bless those who persecute you" (Rom. 12:14).

Even if the sins committed against us were terrible, we want them to be forgiven and for the person to be blessed. We want the one who harmed us to be healed and restored. So Christians pray for those who have offended us and we express the desire for them to have joy in this life and the next. We ask God to make them genuinely happy and to give them whatever they need to be happy and fulfilled.

Perhaps the person who harmed us has their own sufferings. If so, we ask them to be healed. Perhaps they suffer, or suffered, from alcoholism or other addictions. Perhaps they were harmed and need their own healing. So we pray that they would be delivered from illness and sickness.

In this step, true forgiveness begins to flow. Now that I have forgiven the person who harmed me, I begin to see everything in a new light.

To bless someone, make an act of the will with this prayer: "I bless you, [Name] richly, in the name of Jesus Christ, now and forever."

### **3 Give thanks always**

The next step is difficult. It is a call to maturity, a call to sanctity. It is a saintly step for it requires that we see things as the friends of God—the saints—see things.

In the third step, I begin to find Christ despite suffering wounds. We begin by recalling that God's holy will is both causative and permissive. God is the cause of all the good things in my life when he brings blessings into my life. Other times He is permissive, *allowing* bad things to happen. It may be that God has allowed me to become wounded.

God uses my wounds and my pain to teach me humility and dependence on him alone. Through them, I turn to him and he heals me. Thus, my wounds, even though not caused by God, can be transformed into my medicine. We can thank our persecutors because our persecutors awaken us to the goodness of God. Through my suffering, I've learned much about charity, the true nature of the deepest kind of love. With this perspective, we can even begin to thank God for our wounds. With God's healing grace, we can recognize that it is precisely because of our wounds that we have found salvation. For this reason we understand the richness of what St. Paul teaches when he says, "In all circumstances give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:18).

**Though we never ask for persecutions and wounds, they can be a channel for us of the grace of a good and bountiful harvest.** Scripture says, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24).

St. Therese of Avila said “The only thing we will thank God for when we get to Heaven will be our crosses.” St. Rose of Lima said similarly, “Apart from the cross, there is no other ladder by which we may get to Heaven.”

Our Lord taught us to turn the other cheek. Though our wounds may be terrible, they can be glorified by Christ. After all, in heaven Christ’s own wounds of the crucifixion are not erased. They are used to manifest God’s glory, since the wounds become the means by which the apostles are able to recognize the Lord and believe.

Therefore, we should ask for the grace to thank God for the wounds we have suffered in this life because they have the ability to lead to our healing. And we can thank our offenders, in prayer, for being God’s instruments working for our sanctification.

To give thanks to God, make an act of the will with this prayer: “I thank you Lord, and, and I thank you, [Name] for the wound that heals.”

#### **4 Praise the Lord**

In the fourth and final step of forgiveness, we give praise directly to God. Here we turn our thoughts to the glorious reign of God’s heavenly kingdom, bowing down before God to praise him for all that he has given to us.

We acknowledge Our Lord himself as the source of all our life. God is the all-loving Divine Physician who, for our good and eternal salvation, comes to our aid in the midst of sin and suffering.

In fact, as Scripture says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). The Father so longed for the redemption of the world he has made, that he sent his Son to suffer and die that we might come to know God’s own innermost goodness and love. Connected to Christ’s own suffering, our wounds can be great gifts that open us to God’s life, love, and salvation.

Therefore, we praise and thank Almighty God for all our wounds and suffering. In his perfect wisdom, he has designed everything for my good, here and in eternity.

By praising him, we return all that we are and all that we have suffered to God, the source of all that is good in life. This step completes our forgiveness and leads to perfect acceptance of God’s holy will.

**All is in his hands, ordered and arranged by his Divine Providence; all is well in my soul.**

To praise God, make an act of the will with this prayer: “I praise you Lord and your Blessed Mother and I glorify you for your heavenly plan that is saving me and leading me to perfect joy.”

<http://sticna.org/news/an-exorcist-teaches-4-steps-to-forgive?uid=105819>