

I FORGIVE YOU

MAY 2019

Binding and Loosing

In the 2007 blockbuster film Spider-Man 3, Peter Parker, AKA Spider-Man, discovers the identity of his beloved Uncle Ben's killer. At that moment, Peter allows resentment, anger and unforgiveness to bind itself to his heart. This bond had a profound effect on Peter's behavior. He was transformed into an angry, aggressive character who ultimately hurt the people closest to him – the people he loves. Not dealing with his unforgiveness brought the worst out of him and caused significant damage to his life.

It wasn't until he faced the man who took his uncle's life that he chose forgiveness. This triggered a release of all the anger, resentment and hatred Peter had harbored towards this man. At that moment, the repentant man was freed from his guilt, but so was Peter. Peter was also set free.

Unforgiveness is a trap. We are led to believe that when we harbor resentment toward someone who did us wrong, we are holding them hostage to the harm they caused us. But what we fail to realize is what unforgiveness produces in us. Unforgiveness binds itself to our heart and, like the Bible says, *"Watch over each other to make sure that no one misses the revelation of God's grace. And make sure no one lives with a root of bitterness sprouting within them which will only cause trouble and poison the hearts of many."* Hebrews 12:15

Forgiveness is the only antidote. Forgiveness is the only thing that will set us free.

Forgiving Yourself

Sometimes the most difficult thing you will face in life is forgiving yourself.

One time I counseled a man who was plagued with addiction and, it nearly destroyed his marriage. He was a firefighter for more than 25 years and dealt with the adverse effects of his faithful service by self-medicating with alcohol. Thankfully, he had turned the corner and was sober for more than two years, but there was something that still had him imprisoned. Unforgiveness toward himself. His sweet wife had forgiven him. His children had forgiven him. But he couldn't come to forgive himself. No matter how many lives he saved, no matter how much good he did for his fellow first responders and his community, he hated himself for what he had done. By the grace of God and many conversations we shared together, it wasn't until he mustered the courage to let it go, that he finally secured the relief that was out of reach for so many years. When he forgave himself, it was like a huge weight had been lifted off of him. The transformation was palpable.

What About You?

Do you have someone to forgive in your life? Do you need forgiveness? I encourage you to go to God today and receive forgiveness and the capacity to forgive. Allow His grace to set you free from the guilt and shame that has imprisoned you. Embrace the transformation that forgiveness brings, which then enables you to become the person you were created to be! When unforgiveness brings the worst out of you, grace brings out the best. Allow the riches of God's grace to empower you to choose to forgive those who've done you wrong—even yourself.

And today, may you experience the best that grace and forgiveness has to offer by saying three very powerful words, "I forgive you."

**Need to talk?
Have a question? Want prayer?
Reach out to MCMACHaplain@gmail.com**

