

*Anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other.*  
2 Corinthians 5:17-18 MSG

### I. Stumbling Blocks

- Offense—to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way upon which another may trip and fall; to entice to sin; to be displeased or indignant; to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust; to cause one to judge unfavorably or unjustly of another (Strong's)
- Prov 10:12 ESV—Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
- Spirit of Separation (SOS)—giving ground to Satan by shutting God out of certain areas of our lives; building walls that bar access to parts of us
- Prov 18:1 NAS—He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom
- Offense → Disconnect, Separate, Avoid or Hide → SOS → problem emotions like shame, fear, defensiveness, and feeling alone
- Characteristics of SOS:
  - Pushing God or another person away from you
  - Putting conditions on how or where you'll connect with the other person
  - Defending your viewpoint, way, agenda, attitude
  - Difficulty seeing the other person's viewpoint
  - Unwilling to "own" any part of the problem
  - Refusing to deal in honest, healthy, or mature ways
  - Missing the opportunity for personal growth in holiness
- Mt 12:25—Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

### II. Forgiveness

- Col 3:13 MSG—Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you.
- Forgiveness, defined—to cancel a debt in order to provide opportunity for repentance and restoration of the broken relationship (Dan Allender)
- Unforgiveness, defined—not disposed to forgive or show mercy; unrelenting; not allowing for mistakes, carelessness, or weakness
- Prov 19:11 AMP—Good sense makes a man restrain his anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression or an offense
- Unforgiveness costs us in our relationship with God:
  - Mt 5:8—Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.
  - Heb 12:14—Pursue peace with all men and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord

### III. Misunderstandings About Forgiveness

#### a. Forgiveness ≠ Forgetting

- It is an amazing mystery that God, in His omniscience, chooses to FORGET our sins! Jer 31:34 GNT— I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the Lord, have spoken.

- It is not in our best interest to completely forget the pain of our past. Here's why:
  - We are not defined by our past, but it is part of who we are.
  - Forgetting our past would eliminate very important chapters of the story God is writing with our lives.
  - Erasure of our past = seeking to relate with the Ideal vs. Real Self
  - Denial of our history renders us blind to the baggage yet to be addressed
  - We have the benefit of God redeeming our memories—they are transformed and seen in the light of love and eternity every time we revisit it with God. (Secular science supports this with evidence of the neuroplasticity of the brain and memory.)
  
- b. Forgiveness ≠ The End of Pain
  - Forgiveness is a process. Often the initial act of forgiveness does bring with it a sense of peace and freedom because a spiritual transaction has occurred.
  - We don't want to deny or shut down any subsequent painful emotions because:
    - Though we forgive the sinner, we are to continue to righteously hate the sin: Heb 1:9 NIV-- You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.
    - God may have more healing for you emotionally: Ps 32:5 AMP— I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord [continually unfolding the past till all is told]—then You [instantly] forgave me the guilt *and* iniquity of my sin. *Selah* [pause, and calmly think of that]!
  
- c. Forgiveness ≠ No Desire for Vengeance
  - Rom 12:19 NLT—Never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.
  - We look forward to the day when God's righteousness and glory overcome the evil we've endured. Take comfort in the fact that God will make all things right:
    - Ps 9:4 NIV-- For you have upheld my right and my cause, sitting enthroned as the righteous judge.
    - Ps 10:14 NIV-- But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.
    - Ps 96:13-- Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.
    - Ps 140:12 NIV-- I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy.
  
- d. Forgiveness ≠ Peace at Any Price
  - Forgiveness is costly. We must calculate the cost of the debt done to us and then chose in faith to let it go.
  - However, when we do this we are not saying that:
    - What happened was okay
    - We are supposed to sugar-coat, denying the full extent of the harm
    - The other person is not accountable for their behavior
    - We are required to return to unhealthy ways of relating as if nothing happened
    - “Turn the other cheek” = subject ourselves to more evil
  - Prov 25:21-22 TV-- If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for your *kind treatment will be like* heaping hot coals on his head, *it may cause a change in heart*, and the Eternal will repay you.