

Foundation One

Forgiveness

Releasing What Still Owns Us

“Freedom begins when what wounded us no longer determines how we live.”

Preparing the Soil

Before we begin talking about forgiveness, I want to ask you a question.

What are you carrying?

Not physically.

What are you carrying emotionally, mentally, spiritually, relationally?

Perhaps you carry regret,

...resentment,

... shame,

... disappointment,

... grief.

Perhaps it's words you carry that were spoken over you years ago that still echo in your heart.

...or expectations you have never been able to meet.

All of us carry something.

Some burdens strengthen us, others quietly exhaust us.

One of the invitations of LifeCare FIRST is learning to recognize the difference.

Forgiveness begins by noticing what we continue to carry.

The Big Idea

Forgiveness is not pretending the wound never happened.

Forgiveness is not denying pain.

Forgiveness is not excusing harmful behavior.

Forgiveness is not forgetting.

Forgiveness is choosing to release the authority that yesterday's wounds continue to hold over today's life.

It is an act of freedom, NOT approval.

Why Forgiveness Comes First

People often ask, "Why begin with forgiveness?"

It may be because it is difficult to build a healthy future while continually carrying the weight of an unhealthy past.

Imagine trying to build a home while dragging a heavy chain behind you.

Every step becomes harder; every decision requires more effort.

Every new beginning is limited by yesterday's unfinished burdens.

Forgiveness does not erase the chain's existence, it removes the chain from your future.

Understanding What We Carry

Sometimes we carry anger.

Sometimes shame, guilt, blame, disappointment, or the painful belief that we were never enough.

Sometimes we carry the expectations of parents, teachers, employers, churches, or society.

Sometimes we carry wounds we never chose, and some we created ourselves.

Before we release anything, we must first become aware of what we are carrying.

Awareness always comes before freedom.

The Two Directions of Forgiveness

Forgiveness often moves in two directions.

Releasing Others

There are people who have wounded us.

Some intentionally, some unintentionally.

Their actions may never be acceptable.

Their choices may have changed our lives forever.

Forgiveness does not declare those actions acceptable.

It declares that those actions will no longer determine who we are becoming.

Releasing Ourselves

Many people discover that the hardest person to forgive is themselves.

We replay old decisions.

Old failures.

Old regrets.

Old words.

Old seasons.

We continue punishing ourselves long after the moment has passed.

Self-forgiveness is not avoiding responsibility.

It is accepting responsibility, learning from the past, making amends where possible, and refusing to believe that our worst decision is our permanent identity.

Forgiveness Is a Process

Some forgiveness happens in a single moment; most unfolds over time.

There may be days when old memories return, that does not mean you have failed.

Healing often moves in layers: each time you choose freedom over resentment, hope over bitterness, or compassion over revenge, you strengthen a new way of living.

Forgiveness is less like flipping a switch and more like tending a garden.

It requires patience.

Gentleness.

Practice.

And time.

The Presence Pause

Take a slow breath.

Notice what comes to mind when you hear the word “forgiveness.”

Do not judge your response.

Simply notice it.

Ask yourself:

What part of my story still asks for healing?

Who or what continues to occupy more space in my heart than I want it to?

What might freedom look like—not all at once, but one step at a time?

Remain with those questions for a few quiet moments.

There is no need to force an answer.

Sometimes awareness is the first act of healing.

Reflection

Complete these sentences honestly.

The burden I most often carry is...

The story I continue telling myself is...

The person I most struggle to forgive is...

If forgiveness became possible, my life might begin to look like...

This Week's Practice

This week, do not try to forgive everything.

Simply practice noticing.

Notice what your mind returns to.

Notice what emotions arise.

Notice what stories repeat.

Notice without condemnation.

Curiosity is the beginning of freedom.

Closing Thought

You are not being asked to erase your past.

You are being invited to loosen its grip on your future.

Freedom rarely begins with forgetting.

It begins with remembering that your future does not belong to your wounds.

It belongs to the person you are still becoming.