



Total Forgiveness

by Sheryl A. Nichols

How do you know when you have totally forgiven someone? We may tell ourselves that we forgive, but our behavior and our attitude says something different. There is a major destroyer of love on the loose; it can be the leading cause of divorce and the single greatest thief of one's love for life. This destroyer is forgotten, unresolved anger.

We say that we forgive, but instead we bury our anger. The problem is that anger is always buried alive! If we don't resolve this anger, we set ourselves up for a great deal of potential harm in our current and future relationships. Anger is a secondary emotion that arises out of fear, frustration, hurt, or some combination of these three. Holding on to this anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; but you are the one who gets burned.

Total forgiveness is initiated by a change in behavior. Before you can forgive someone totally, you had time to observe their character, acknowledge what they did, and see a change in their behavior. Some indicators of Total Forgiveness include:

- ♥ You don't tell everybody about the pain that someone has caused you, but instead you protect them. You shouldn't tell everybody your business because they may not be able to forgive as you have forgiven. Once a person has proven they have changed, why keep

bringing it up? Total forgiveness doesn't punish people for what they have done.

- ♥ You want that person to be at complete ease around you. People who haven't forgiven want others to feel uncomfortable because of what they did.
- ♥ You don't want the person to be mad at themselves. If you forgive someone, you want them to forgive themselves as well.
- ♥ You can be generous to the person you have forgiven. Generous in love, companionship, and faith.

People can change. When there has truly been a character change, the test before you will not matter because you will pass every time. A test is an opportunity to prove that change has occurred.

Remember that we cannot change another person's behavior. Putting our energy into changing another person to enhance our own enjoyment of him or her is a solution that never works. We can choose to make changes in ourselves and as changes occur in ourselves, people around us usually adjust their responses and choices according to our new behavior.

Cited From: Pastor Keith Battle, Zion Church, Largo, MD and Gary Smalley, "Making Love Last Forever"