

Celebrate Recovery Lesson 17: Forgiveness

As we step into **Celebrate Recovery lesson 17**, we will notice ourselves becoming braver. More courage is required as we take this step of offering forgiveness to others. It will just require a bit of dedication and motivation – nothing we can't handle!

Think about all the people who have forgiven us during our life. Think about God's forgiveness – a wonderful gift we have never deserved! **Forgiveness** is truly a beautiful thing!

Celebrate Recovery lesson 17 might be a bit of a challenge, but this life-changing step is **needed** if you are to continue progressing in recovery!

Lesson 17 continues with **Step 8 and Step 9** from the Alcoholics Anonymous and Celebrate Recovery programs. Also, it works with principle 6 of the Celebrate Recovery 8 Principles.

What is Celebrate Recovery Lesson 17: Forgiveness?

Celebrate Recovery principle 6 is: *Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others.*

*Blessed are the merciful.
Matthew 5:7*

*Blessed are the peacemakers.
Matthew 5:9*

Celebrate Recovery Step 8 says: *We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.* This is quite humbling, but with the help of the Lord, you can accomplish this!

*Do to others as you would have them do to you.
Luke 6:31*

Celebrate Recovery Step 9 says: *We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

Another powerful step we will cover in this lesson! Don't panic yet; you've got this! Just have a little faith!

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there, remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.
First, go and be reconciled to them; then, come and offer your gift.*

Matthew 5:23-24

Let's do a quick overview of Celebrate Recovery (CR) and then tackle each kind of forgiveness – one at a time. Try not to worry too much, as CR believes strongly in baby steps. In other words, you don't need to be overwhelmed because we'll take it one step at a time!

Darkness cannot drive out darkness:

Only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate:

Only Love can do that.

Martin Luther King J.

Treat others as you want them to treat you.

Luke 6:31 (TLB)

What is Forgiveness in Recovery?

LET IT GO!

Forgiveness is all about letting go of fear, shame, resentment, anger, and guilt. A tall order, right? How do we just let go of all those things – all at once? The key is to realize that you cannot let go of everything in a sudden manner; it takes time.

When you truly offer forgiveness, you will **feel changes** in all areas of your life. Those negative traits (fear, shame, resentment, anger, and guilt) can engulf you if you allow them to fester in your life. They can prevent you from progressing in recovery, too!

For this reason, we are going to cover this topic fully. We want to make sure to **get rid of all this negativity** that is controlling your life. Imagine how freeing it will be when those negative traits have disappeared! It will be like having a clean slate – in some aspects!

...and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

Matthew 6:12 (TLB)

In Celebrate Recovery Lesson 17

We will cover three kinds of forgiveness:

(1) God's forgiveness

(2) the forgiveness to others

(3) the forgiveness of yourself

#1. **A**ccept God's Forgiveness.

Think about what our Lord Christ Jesus did on the cross for us. Because of His death, we now have our sins forgiven. That is powerful action on the part of the Lord – **paying our debt in FULL!** We didn't deserve it, but we can certainly be grateful for it today!

Because of this **beautiful sacrifice** that was made on our behalf, it is my recommendation that you stop right now and pray. Thank the Lord for all that He has done for you. After you've finished, take a moment to sit in silence. Give God a chance to speak to you.

It is often when we listen that we learn the most. We are able to listen to God in many ways. You can open your Bible and **meditate on scripture**, write in a prayer journal – whatever comes to mind, or even just sit in silence and let your thoughts wander to where the Lord takes them!

The important thing is to **show gratitude** and work on building your relationship with God.

You can **start small**, too. You don't have to have grand gestures each time you want to be close to God. A prayer here and a Bible study there are good starts! Don't be too hard on yourself!

We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

Romans 3:22-24 (NLT)

#2. **F**orgive Others.

Letting go of the pain from the past is never easy, but you must **release and forgive it**, or it will keep you as a prisoner.

You shouldn't want to be a prisoner to anything; that's what's great about being a Christian – we have been **set FREE by Christ!** It's something to be passionate about!

Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

Romans 12:17-18 (NLT)

As you work on releasing and forgiving the pain from your past, make sure you **don't blame God**. It's easy to place the blame somewhere – anywhere – when we don't have clear-cut answers, but God is only interested in doing good for you, not harm (Jeremiah 29:11).

*In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus.
So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you,
and he will place you on a firm foundation.
1 Peter 5:10 (NLT)*

Attention: Victims of Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, or Childhood Emotional Abuse

Try not to place the blame of your hurt and pain anywhere it does not belong. If you are the victim of any kind of abuse, please know that we feel for you and know that those negative feelings won't simply go away. We hurt with you through all this, just as Jesus does!

According to the Celebrate Recovery curriculum, the best way to **find peace and freedom** is by forgiving your perpetrators. This in no way excuses this person from the harm that was done against you. Forgiveness just allows you to be released from any power that person had on you and the situation.

Steps 8 and 9 for Principle 6 have been rewritten on your behalf as follows.

Step 8 – Create a list of all who have harmed us and be willing to seek God's help in forgiving our perpetrators and ourselves. Realize we've harmed others and be willing to make amends to them.

Step 9 – Extend forgiveness to ourselves and others who have perpetrated against us, realizing this is not always confrontation but is an attitude of the heart. Make direct amends to those we have harmed except when this would cause injury to them or others. Ask for forgiveness, too.

The process encourages asking for forgiveness from those who have harmed you, fostering personal and relational healing.

“Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Ghandi

#3. Forgive Yourself.

Do you feel that the guilt and shame from your past are too much to forgive? Connect with other people at Celebrate Recovery, and encourage one another! **Reach out to someone** who understands what it feels like to confess these things – say them out loud; they are at CR!

You might think you are alone, but **there are many people who feel the same way** that you do. They are probably your fellow brothers and sisters at Celebrate Recovery! Remember to listen as much as you talk; give as much as you receive!! Work as a team, and you'll succeed!!

Another way that you can forgive yourself is by **turning to God**. In Isaiah 1:18-19, we are urged to **talk things over with the Lord**. It doesn't matter what kind of sin you have committed because He is more than willing to listen; He wants to hear from you, in fact. The Lord will make you new!

Also, He already knows what you have done; it's no big secret. Why not come clean? Letting it out will help you forgive yourself. Romans 8:1 tells us that there is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, so what are you waiting for??

***Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)***

To be completely free from your resentments, anger fears, shame, and guilt, you need to give and accept forgiveness in all areas of your life. If you do not, your recovery will be stalled and incomplete.

**Biblical forgiveness requires repentance on our part
(turning away from our old life of sin)
and having faith in Jesus Christ.**

Have you accepted God's Forgiveness?

Have you forgiven others who have hurt you?

This is what God wants you to do with the darkness of your past:

**"Come, let's talk this over, says the Lord;
no matter how deep the stain of your sins,
I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly
fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson,
I can make you white as wool.
If you will only let me help you."
(Isaiah 1: 18 – 19, TLB)**

Have you forgiven yourself?

Small Group Questions

Which of the 3 kinds of forgiveness was the easiest for you to accept, and why?

Which of the 3 kinds of forgiveness was the most difficult for you to accept, and why?

What do the words “it is finished” from Christ (John 19:30) mean to you?

**Which hurts, habits, or hang-ups (pain) from a past relationship are you
still hanging on to?**

Specifically, how can you let go of these hurts, habits, or hang-ups (pain)?

Do you believe that you owe God amends? When do you plan to give it?

In what ways have you been blaming God for harm that others took against you?

Did you forgive yourself? In what ways do you still feel guilt and shame?

Make a list and pray about these things, and we will work on them in small group!

Needs Work

My Story Regarding Celebrate Recovery Lesson 17

Greetings! If you haven't met me by now, I'm happy to introduce myself. I am **Dennis**, a grateful believer in Christ Jesus.

I **celebrate recovery** from an addiction to drugs and alcohol, and I struggle with anxiety, perfectionism, and patience!

As we've discussed in Celebrate Recovery lesson 17, **forgiveness** is the key to letting go of any resentment and pain in recovery.

I'm far from perfect. I struggle like anyone else, but I believe in God, and that makes all the difference in the world in my book! Trusting Him was the best decision I've ever made in my life.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)*

Do They Deserve Forgiveness?

One of the **hardest things** for me as a child was having other kids pick on me. This continued as an adult, and I've never really known the reason that it seems I am the source of so much torment and gossip. I've been teased, tortured, made fun of, or whatever you want to call it!

Of course, that's **not the worst thing** that's ever happened to me, but each story gets its place. There was actually a "leader" of the crowd that would make fun of me in middle school. As an adult, probably not knowing who I was, he approached me via a dating website!

I didn't go out with the guy, but I did find it amusing that he had so much negativity to say about the way I looked as a preteen yet had no problem going out on a date as an adult!

Looking back at some of the ways I was tormented as a youngster, I realize that kids can be really, really mean! I was a sweet Christian girl who definitely **didn't bring** any of that nonsense on to myself, but it continued most of my life. I still don't know why, which made it worse!

If I knew why I was the unfortunate recipient of "the royal treatment," I think it would have made things easier. Life doesn't always have answers, though! As mentioned, **I'm not perfect** and still get worked up when I think of those bullies messing with me every single day!

*Cast your cares on the Lord, and He will sustain you;
He will never let the righteous be shaken.
Psalm 55:22 (NIV)*

To Forgive or Not?

Through Celebrate Recovery, I learned the **power of forgiveness**. People cannot hurt you if you do not allow them to (emotionally speaking). As long as I forgave those bullies, I knew that they could do no harm to me anymore, and I still know that today!

So, that's the **self-help answer** to it all. The truth is that if you forgive someone, you can let go of all that resentment and bitterness. It dissipates, and you begin to heal in new ways. In fact, you will start to see new growth, and you'll begin to forget all about those bullies!

That's true – unless you write about them!! Ha!

All pain and bitterness aside, it's kind of funny to look back at kids who made fun of me. Without trying to sound conceited, I've always gone with the "they were jealous" reasoning for their actions, but I could be totally wrong. Again, I'm not perfect; I'm just **made perfect** by Him!

We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Where I shine, another person may struggle and vice versa! That's what makes us so great. If you don't know your purpose or calling, you should do some investigating to discover how truly uniquely God made you, too!

Did I forgive the bullies? Yes! I've done things that I'm not proud of, so of course, I understand that we were all young and dumb once. Some of us are **still struggling** in the intelligence area, but I can't fault them for that! I have no built-up trauma from the experience, thanks to CR!

*Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.
Matthew 6:34 (NIV)*

**"To err is human; to forgive, divine."
Gandi**

How do you introduce yourself in Celebrate Recovery?

You can begin by stating you are a grateful believer in Jesus Christ. Then, name the things you celebrate recovery from. If you have suffered from substance abuse issues or an addiction to pornography, you can mention that. You can also name the issues you still struggle with.

Conclusion

You have truly accomplished something if you've finished this lesson! **Congratulations** on forgiving those people who did you harm!! This is quite an achievement!! **Celebrate Recovery Lesson 17 Questions**