NATIONAL FORGIVENESS WEEK

"Father … forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us."
(Matthew 6:9-14)

HOW TO FORGIVE

- Forgiveness is a lifestyle; a grace we can bring to those who have offended or hurt us. It is a gift we can bestow, even on those we deem as unworthy. It is an important, yet much neglected aspect of our Christian life. We think it applies only to gross damages and destructive hurts. But forgiveness is the air we breathe, as we quietly apply it to the little, almost insignificant niggly offences we feel in our hearts amidst our daily relationships and encounters.

- Forgiveness is a key route to Christian sanctification, allowing the Holy Spirit to flow within our families and churches. It is foundational to revival, and more. It is ultimately important to maintain and sustain God's dwelling place in our midst, for we are His temple built without hands.

FORGIVING THOSE WHO HAVE HURT YOU

- If you have had negative thoughts or silent judgments about someone, and they know nothing about it, there is no need to go to them to ask their forgiveness. [Confronting people with rogue thoughts you have held or spoken to others about them will only cause problems]. It is enough that you ask God's forgiveness.

- You need no one's permission to forgive, not even the person you are forgiving. You can forgive before God alone.

- When you've been hurt it can be difficult to know how to respond, but God asks you to forgive. You can forgive in the moment but may then need to go to God in prayer to consolidate your forgiveness by blessing the offender(s). Let Him tend to your hurting heart.

- Respond in grace, not correction. When you forgive, do not lecture, shame, or scold the one who has hurt you. They may not know they have hurt you, so your forgiveness can be without them ever knowing.

- Even if you feel you did nothing to deserve the hurt they inflicted upon you, guard your heart from bitterness. A forgiving heart brings freedom, not only to you but also to the one who hurt you.

- If your forgiveness is requested by someone who has knowingly offended you, avoid "I forgive you but…" Forgiveness does not come with

conditions, corrections, or veiled blame. Let your, "I forgive you" be full and final, free from accusation.

- Likewise, avoid "I forgive you if…" Conditional forgiveness is not true forgiveness. Demanding change, restitution, or behavioural modification as a prerequisite undermines the beauty and humility of forgiveness. Forgiveness must be a free gift, not a transaction.

- Forgiveness releases all expectations. When you forgive, surrender the right to expect the other person to change. Forgiveness is your obedience to God, not a means of controlling a person.

HOW TO ASK SOMEONE TO FORGIVE YOU

- When you have offended/hurt/wronged someone publicly, the confessions and requests for forgiveness should also be public. If the offense is only between you and another, then your request should remain between you and them.

- Ask humbly, without excuses. Avoid saying things like, "I did it because you made me feel this way or that." Even if you might be justified in your actions or reactions, resist the urge to defend yourself.

- Do not justify your behaviour or try to lessen the weight of your wrongdoing. Ask as if the sin is yours alone, without accusing or raising things in the way they treated you.

- If they are not yet ready to forgive you, rest in the knowledge that you have done what is right before God. Give them time. Never try to force forgiveness.

- In some cases, true repentance for wrongdoing requires you to make restitution. In other words, if you have stolen, damaged or destroyed something, then the items should be replaced or paid for.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS AND IS NOT

- Forgiveness is an act of your will, not of your feelings.

- It is good to reconcile, but forgiveness does not demand that relationships be restored, which is not always possible or wise. If the offender is unreachable, has passed away, or poses a danger to you, forgive them before God and entrust the situation to Him without pursuing reconciliation.

- Forgiveness retains no record of wrongs. Forgiveness forsakes your right to ever again accuse that person.

- Forgiveness cancels all blame and demands. It gives up the right to compensation and sets the offender free from your judgment.

- Forgiveness does not mean that you are agreeing with or condoning the offence or wrongdoing against you.

- With respect to criminal or violent acts, forgiveness does not override the nation's judicial system which may still impact the offender.

- Forgiveness demands no apology.

For more information see …
nationalforgivenessweek.com

Recommendation: *When Angry Hearts Forgive* by Robert Warren, available on amazon.com