



Speaker: Matt Magee

Series: Abide: Cultivating Intimacy with Christ

Sermon Title: Is it Biblical to "Forgive Yourself"

Scripture: [Psalm 51:1-4](#) (and other various passages)

(Pro Tip: click on the passages linked above to be taken to a page with all the passages in one location.)

Main Idea: Walking in the Spirit with God's forgiveness.

OUTLINE

- Remember Tim Challies' helpful definition of biblical discernment: "Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God's Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong." (Tim Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*, ch. 3.)
- Article referenced for critique: [How Can I Forgive Myself? A Therapist Explains](#)
- Training ourselves in a wise pattern of biblical steps
 1. Note the specific statement or principle you need to understand biblically.
 1. Does "forgiving myself" pursue a biblical approach to lasting peace in one's inner man?
 2. Note your instinctual answer. Write it down. Commit to what it actually is. It's okay—good and humbling even—to realize you may have been wrong. That's learning.
 3. Pray, asking God to give you understanding according to His Word.
 1. Praying biblical passages is helpful to shape your thinking because biblical prayers have the right goals embedded in them.
 2. Psalm 119:34, "Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.
 3. Colossians 1:9-14, "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all

endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

4. Search the Bible for relevant passages and make a list of them.
 1. Forgiveness in the Old Testament
 1. Carries the idea of atonement, where a price has been paid in place of another, and therefore the consequence of that sin has been “lifted and permanently carried away” from the sinner. It also carries the idea of sins being wiped clean.
 2. Example: Psalm 51:1-4, 10
 2. Forgiveness in the New Testament
 1. Dealing graciously with
 1. Example: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11
 2. To send away
 1. Examples: Romans 4:7; 1 John 1:9
 3. What about "mistakes"?
 1. The word “mistake” is in the OT about 7-10 times, and carries the idea of committing a sin unintentionally
 2. Example: Num 15:28
5. Be sure you correctly understand what the Bible is teaching.
 1. Write a sentence or two, or a couple paragraphs, summarizing the Bible’s teaching on forgiveness. *(This is a fairly unedited summary Pastor Matt wrote, not intended to be a comprehensive teaching. It’s what someone might write as they work through this process.)*
 1. Forgiveness is necessary when someone has intentionally or unintentionally thought or done something that God has communicated is wrong. All sin, though it often effects people, is ultimately against God and must be dealt with between the sinner and God first and foremost.
 2. Then, when I’ve confessed to the Lord and in faith according to His Word know that He has forgiven me, I am free to acknowledge my wrong to the individual I’ve sinned against in a lesser sense than the Lord. I can and should go to them, confess my sin and seek their forgiveness. Whether or not they grant forgiveness is not my responsibility. My responsibility is to

ensure that I've humbly, kindly, and fully communicated my acknowledgement of my wrongdoing without minimizing it, and expressed my desire for a restored relationship in time so that we can live as Christians in harmony with one another seeking to bring glory to God with our lives.

6. Test the specific statement or principle using the Bible as your source.
7. Summarize a biblically-discerned statement that addresses the statement or principle you're considering.
 1. The original thought I was seeking to understand was, "Does "forgiving myself" pursue a biblical approach to lasting peace in one's inner man?"
 2. Pastor Matt's summary answer is (again, fairly unedited for example). You would do well to even compare what's below to Scripture):

"No, the principle of forgiving myself has been devised by the world to genuinely help people deal with "negative emotions" by working through "The 4 R's of Forgiveness," which mimic biblical responsibility but miss the mark because of its man-centeredness. Forgiveness and reconciliation must be in relation to God, every time!

Rather than simply seeking to remove unwanted "negative emotions," I am to pursue the full, lasting joy of knowing that my sins—whether intentional or unintentional—can be fully forgiven by God alone when I acknowledge my sin against Him with biblical remorse which produces repentance.

As I receive God's forgiveness, I am to remind myself repeatedly of the reality that HE has commanded His steadfast love toward me and I am to find joy in Him alone!

8. (At any point in this process, seek the input of another more biblically mature believer.)
9. Hold fast to God's Word through faith.
10. Put your newly understood principle into practice.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Take a minute to review the definition of discernment above. What are you learning about your need to develop biblical discernment?
2. Are you used to using the expression "forgive myself" or "forgive yourself"? What did you learn from the Bible about whether this is a biblical way of thinking?
3. How does the concept of 'forgiving myself' align with or contradict biblical principles of forgiveness?
4. Are you tempted to respond with something like, "Well, I know what I mean when I say that...it's just a figure of speech."
5. Is it helpful to use unbiblical terminology to try to convey truth? Why or why not?
6. What are some practical steps you can take to hold fast to God's Word when facing personal failure?
7. Switching gears a bit, what is a thought or idea you need to walk through these steps with. Will you do this as a group or work on it on your own this week and share what you learned with your group?
8. What do you see about how growth in biblical discernment can help you deepen your personal fellowship with the Lord?