

17. Your Crown of Love and Compassion

Psalm 103

Did you know that you have a crown? God has crowned you with love and compassion (Ps 103:4). Your crown hasn't been given to you as a reward but as a mark and as a symbol of your royalty. You have God's mark, the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), and you are God's child (1 Jn 3:1)—that makes you royalty. Your Father wants to help you when you are in need and to forgive you when you sin.

Forgiveness, whether human or divine, is an indescribable gift. And it isn't cheap.

✚ What did it cost God to forgive you (Heb 10:10; 1 Jn 2:1-2)? Because the price is so high (and has already been paid), is there anything you can humanly do to earn forgiveness?

✚ What step do you need to take to be forgiven (1 Jn 1:9)? What happens to your sin when you are forgiven (Ps 103:12, Jer 31:34; Mic 7:19)?

✚ What does receiving God's forgiveness require of you (Mt 6:14-15; Eph 4:32)? How does God's forgiveness change your attitude toward people who need your forgiveness?

✚ Why is it important for you to forgive others (2 Co 2:7, 11)? How far do you have to go in forgiving those who hurt you (Mt 18:21-35)? Is there someone in your life you find you can't forgive?

Enjoying God Through the Word

Read Luke 15:11-32. This is the familiar parable of the lost son. Which person in the story best describes you today? Perhaps your inner life has been so transformed by God's forgiveness that you can empathize with others' weaknesses and easily forgive them, like the father in the story. Or perhaps, like the younger son, you've demanded God's gifts and then run your own way toward destruction. Perhaps you yearn to return to God, but you're fearful of rejection. Or perhaps, like the elder son, you look at others and say, "After all the horrible things they've done, how can God use them instead of me?" No matter which person you identify with, no matter what your circumstance, God wants to meet you in your need.

Enjoying God Through Experience

If you need to forgive someone, recall your own weaknesses and failings. Your own need for forgiveness may help you to forgive that person. Forgiveness is a choice. You can choose to hold on to your hurt, but it will leave only bitterness and anger. Forgiving frees you as much as it frees the person who is forgiven. If there is someone you feel you cannot forgive, admit to God that you cannot forgive, and ask him to help you follow his example (Lk 23:34; 1Pe 2:21-23) and to do what he commands (Mt 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35).

If you need to be forgiven by someone, a spirit of brokenness and humility is necessary before you can seek that forgiveness. Allow the Holy Spirit to soften your heart. You may find that a simple "I'm sorry" is not enough. An act of contrition or restitution may be necessary. Remember that you cannot force someone to forgive you. Forgiveness is a gift.

Sometimes it's hard to accept forgiveness from God. You simply can't forgive yourself—even when God already has. Remember that God "does not treat [you] as [your] sins deserve" (Ps 103:10). When you confess your sin, it's gone (Ps 103:12). If you have not asked forgiveness, why not do so now? If you have already sought forgiveness but you lack assurance, ask for God's grace to be able to accept what he has given you.