

Steps toward Forgiveness

1. Think of a person or group of people (organizations) in your life who you have closed your heart to. Perhaps they are someone who has hurt you in the past and you decided not to trust again. Maybe there's a person who has qualities that get on your nerves.
2. Once you have a person in mind, imagine that person is in a room and you are outside the room looking in at the person through a window.
3. Notice how you feel as you look at that person. Perhaps you feel angry, detached, afraid, or judgmental.
4. Now shift your focus to that feeling and ask if it would be willing to separate from you a little bit, just for a second, while you remain outside the room. It may seem strange to talk to a feeling that way, but for the sake of the exercise, just play along and see how it feels.
5. If after you asked the feeling to separate from you, you sense a withdrawal of the energy or sensation of that feeling, notice what emotion or thought comes up next relative to the person in the room.
6. If the next thing to emerge is not curiosity, acceptance, or compassion, then ask that next feeling to separate also.
7. If, while doing this, you don't sense a shift or movement from these protective emotions or thoughts, then ask what they are afraid would happen if they did separate. Sometimes those parts of us have good reasons to not want to move aside and leave us vulnerable to that person again. You can reassure them that you won't be going into the room in this imagery exercise or taking any new risks with the person in real life. You just want to get a brief sense of what happens when they let you be present outside the room.
8. If your protective parts separated from you, you may have begun to spontaneously experience qualities of your Core or the fruit of the Spirit emerging. Perhaps you suddenly felt curious about why the person acted the way he or she did, or you could see the situation from the person's perspective and better understood the behavior. Maybe you still didn't want to get near that person but had less need to change them.
9. Notice whether the person's image changed, perhaps becoming less repulsive or menacing.
10. If you are feeling compassion, go ahead and extend compassion into the room in whatever way feels right and safe.
11. Now, imagine God/Christ/Spirit/Trinity looking at this person/group. Ask Him how He feels toward them, if He can forgive them. Consider and meditate on His perspective.
12. Notice the calm in this moment and see if you can recall that space inside next time you have to interact with this person or the next time you think of them.

*Note: If you were unable to get to compassion toward this person or organization, do not be discouraged. It is common for people to need to do this exercise multiple times before gaining the perspective of Christ's compassion.