

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE THREE KINDS OF FORGIVENESS

**PREMATURE FORGIVENESS** is a common mistake made by hurting spouses, especially Christians. It is usually an attempt by the betrayed one to patch things up quickly and hope the injuries and destructive behaviors will magically go away. It can also be a way to appease a distancing or defensive spouse. But swiftly brushing serious matters under the rug shoves untold secrets underground, creating invisible barriers between the couple. Both the betrayer and the injured are harmed when they minimize corrosive issues.

When we hastily extend forgiveness for major offenses, we inadvertently sabotage ourselves from genuine healing. As a result, our feelings are not thoroughly processed, we gloss over specific wrongs, and we deprive our wounds of the necessary repair stitches from the bottom up. Simultaneously, we also deny the offender the chance to comprehend the extent of the harm they have inflicted. Of course, they still might not have a change of heart, but swift forgiveness makes it easier for offenders to stay in denial.

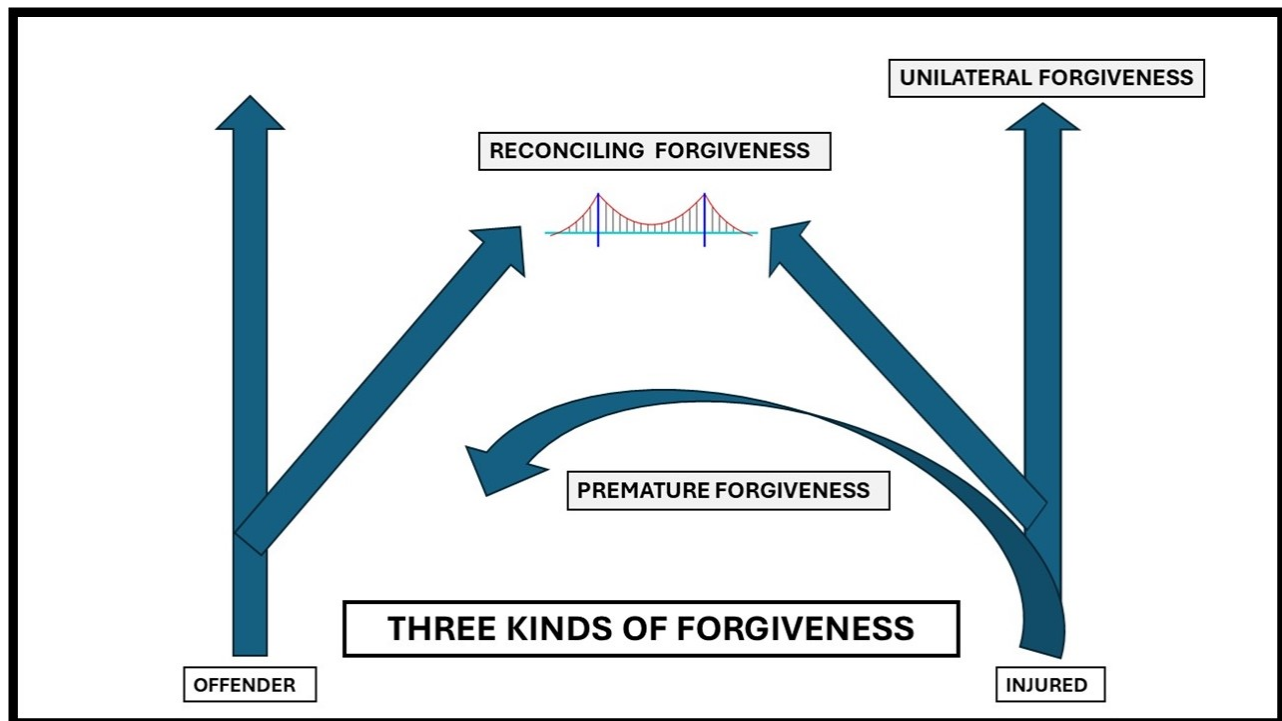
**RECONCILING FORGIVENESS** is a transactional, mutual process reserved for the sincerely repentant and a willing, though injured, partner. It requires an authentically remorseful offender and an atmosphere of earned trust and safety. Reconciling forgiveness is hard work, as both parties need to drop their defenses and make small moves toward the other in a sincere, believable manner. This takes a lot of courage on both people's part and is ideal to do with the help of an outside mentor, coach, or professional.

**UNILATERAL FORGIVENESS**. One-way forgiveness is our only option when the offender is defensive, distant, dead, or defiant. Christ chose to extend unearned, undeserved, unsought-for forgiveness on the cross when he looked down on those who crucified him and prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). One-sided forgiveness is the most wrenching forgiveness of all. When a non-repentant person refuses to acknowledge their wrongdoing, emotional trust is impossible to rebuild, and we can feel like we've been left holding the bag of injuries. Alone.

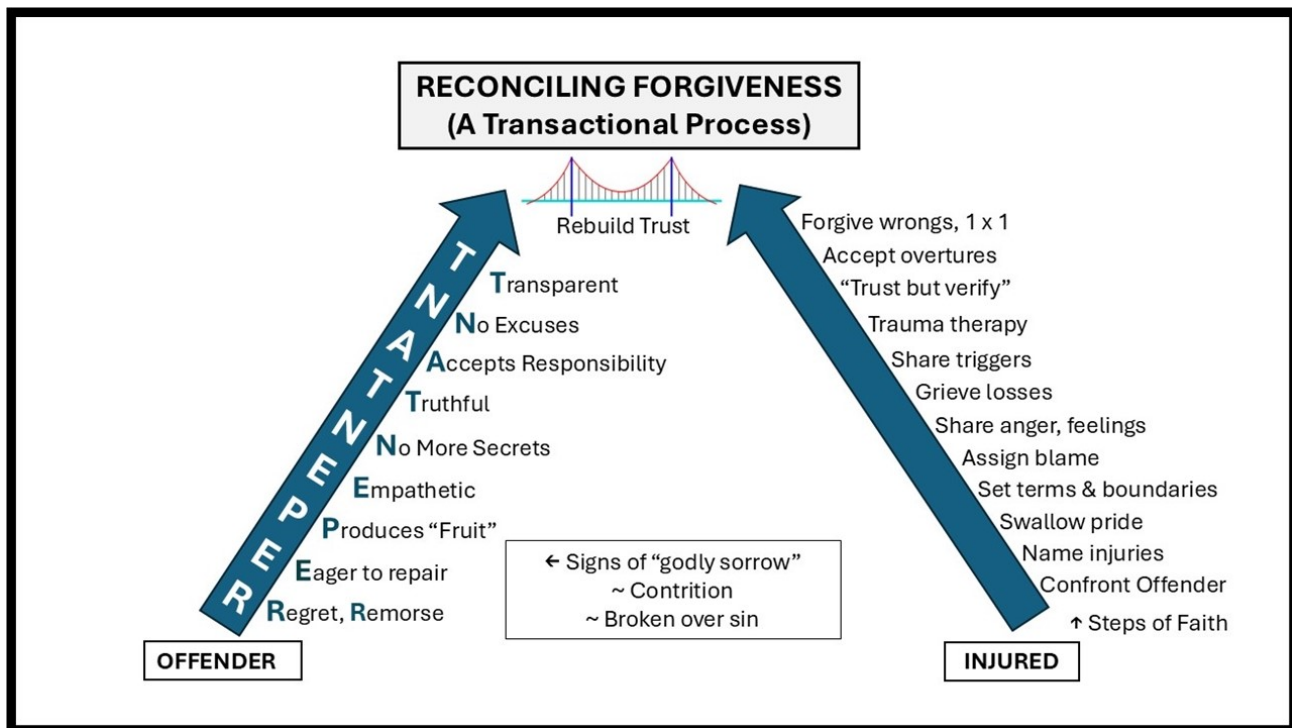
When your former straying spouse has no idea of the depth of the wounds they've caused and shows no interest in rectifying their wrongs, Jesus' example may strengthen your resolve to consider the path of Unilateral Forgiveness, for your own emotional and mental health.

All forms of Forgiveness are humbling to carry out. But letting go of our resentments toward someone who has profoundly injured us and altered our lives is not an easy task. It's a process that requires layers of processing, especially in the aftermath of divorce. Rather than trying to forgive a straying and abandoning spouse all at once, it is best to address specific wounds, one at a time, with a safe prayer partner or alone and with God.

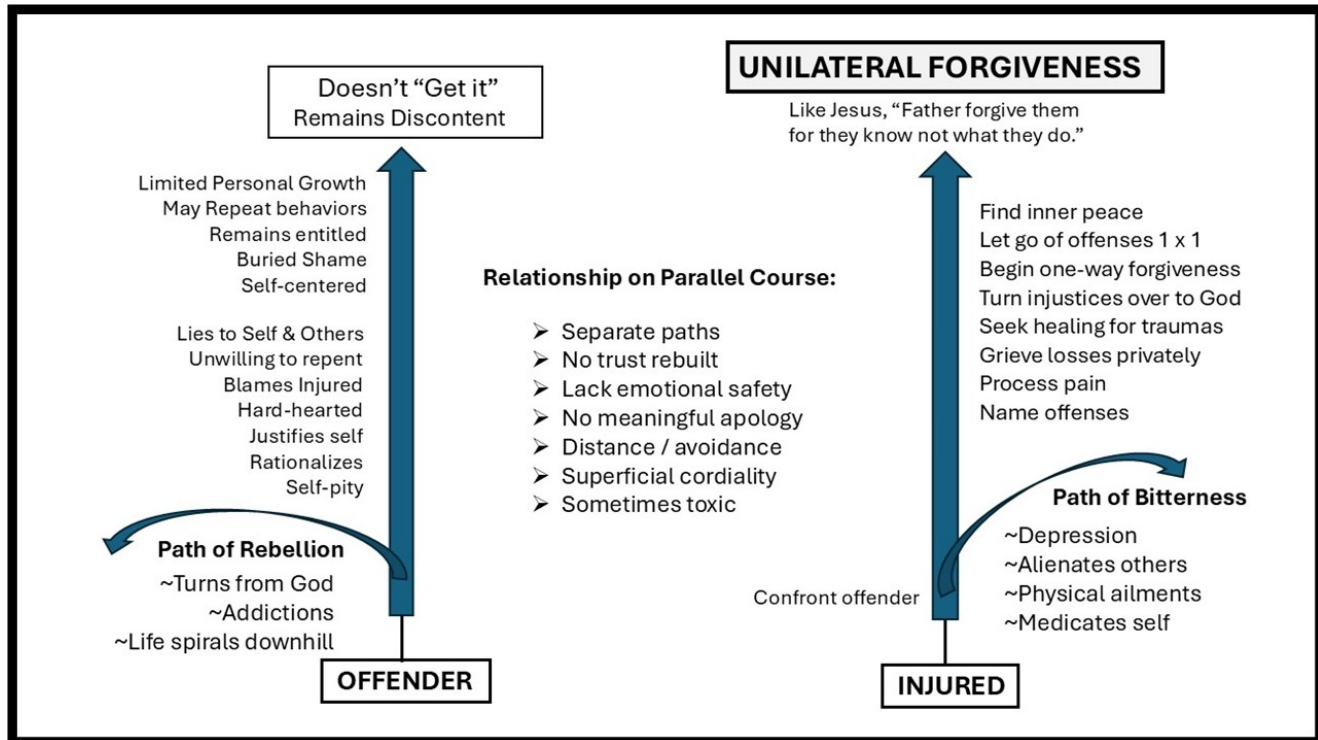
## Overview Chart



## Reconciling Forgiveness



## Unilateral Forgiveness



For more information on the Three Kinds of Forgiveness, read Chapters 22 – 24 in *Redeeming the Post-Affair Divorce: Heal Your Life, Restore Your Faith After Infidelity Breaks Up Your Marriage*; and consult Chapters 19 – 20 in the accompanying Workbook. [www.lindajmacdonald.com/books](http://www.lindajmacdonald.com/books)