One of the most well-known, yet false, concepts is the need for believers in Christ to “forgive themselves.” Yet, if it is necessary for a believer to “forgive self” in addition to receiving God’s forgiveness, then a believer is actually saying that God’s plan for forgiveness is insufficient. Here is why:

1. Receiving God’s forgiveness is not a matter of “feeling forgiven,” rather, it is a matter of trusting God and His promises (Romans 5:1-2, Colossians 1:21-23).

2. Since God says there is no condemnation (no guilt, but complete forgiveness) for one who is in Christ, then believers should not trust personal feelings (Romans 8:1). Instead, they should trust God’s Word. Forgiveness from God is a matter of faith, not feelings (Hebrews 11:6).

When God says that He forgives a believer and provides cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9), what more could a mere mortal do to complete His work?

The “need” to “forgive yourself” typically indicates that one has a sense of guilt over past sins. Feeling remorse over past sins is not necessarily detrimental, especially if it reminds a person of the consequences of sin and helps one not to repeat previous mistakes. However, dwelling on personal failures or being controlled by feelings of guilt over previous sins are contrary to God’s plan for a believer to face and deal with past sins.

God’s plan for a believer to be an overcomer in Christ involves a confession of one’s sins to Him (1 John 1:9) and, if necessary, a confession of sin(s) at an appropriate time to others (based on Proverbs 25:11; Matthew 7:12; James 5:16). Inherent to authentic confession is repentance (Proverbs 28:13, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10), which is a turning away from sin to follow Christ. In following Christ, a believer will put off old ways of thinking, speaking, and acting in order to put on Christ-likeness in every dimension (Ephesians 4:22-24), all of which contribute to an on-going renewal of one’s mind (Romans 12:2).

“Forgiving self” is an expression of natural wisdom and is an outgrowth of humanistic philosophy. God’s Word has only two perspectives on forgiveness:

1. A person needs to be forgiven by God (Colossians 1:13-14, 1 John 1:9).

2. A believer is to forgive others, following the example of God’s forgiveness in Christ Jesus (Matthew 18:32-33, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12-13).

**NOTE:** For an expanded study on the subject of “Forgiving Yourself,” go to Rejecting Popular Untruths.