

Many books have been written on forgiveness. It's a big topic, already covered from many angles by a variety of noted authors. So what makes this one special? This book's uniqueness arises from the source of the material. Jesus had much to say about forgiveness during His life on earth, and it is such an important topic that He has more to say today.

We all want to be forgiven for our blunders and faults, but extending forgiveness to others is a big challenge. And yet a number of psychologists and sociologists believe that doing so is vital for our well-being, happiness, and future success. Learn how to forgive from the One who forgives us for everything we have done or will do wrong.



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From Jesus with Love—Forgiveness



FROM JESUS WITH LOVE



Forgiveness





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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

Forgiveness

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Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.” Jesus had already expounded on this idea 2,000 years earlier in His famous Sermon on the Mount:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”¹

A superficial reading of this passage can tend to annoy many of us because it goes against human inclination and the desire for fairness. But Jesus was not placing an unbearable burden upon us with these instructions. Quite the contrary: He was freeing us from an unbearable and crippling condition—the desire for revenge and retribution. He knew that this would bring sorrow and pain, and He was offering the antidote.



There are many times when we have to make the choice to forgive or not to forgive. Provocations can range from idiosyncrasies on someone's part to unintentional hurts, repeated mistakes, willful wrongs, actual malice, to even actions with irreparable consequences. The choice for each of us, however, is still the same—to forgive or not.

In the following messages from Jesus, He explains a great deal on the topic of forgiveness. However, this book doesn't contain all the answers or cover all possible scenarios. To receive guidance, support, and strength for your own situation, you too can hear directly from Jesus. He will speak to anyone who believes in Him, asks Him to speak, and accepts that the "still, small voice"² they hear in their hearts is Him speaking. Your faith can grow as you bring your questions to Him and receive in return His love, insight, and perfect peace.

Open your heart to Jesus, receive His words of love and life, and discover for yourself the transformational power of forgiveness.

1. *Matthew 5:38–39, 43–44*

2. *1 Kings 19:12*

CHAPTER ONE

Forgiveness — What?



Above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

—1 Peter 4:8



Freedom

When you let go of the anger that you have been holding in your heart against someone, you are creating a space for Me to fill with love and peace.

When you forgive, you are doing yourself a favor. However the hurt started, and whoever started it, holding on to the pain hurts you and distances you from Me. Forgiving frees you from what's holding you captive and allows you to live life fully again.

Do you want freedom? Do you want relief? Do you want lasting inner peace? These are yours when you forgive. You might think that the other person should be the one to fix it, but in fact only you and I together can repair your soul. The sooner you let it go, the sooner you can feel true joy again!



A choice

Forgiveness is moving on past a mistake or wrong done to you. It's a choice to not allow that pain to fester into resentment and bitterness.

Many people conclude that to forgive means to treat what took place as if it never happened. But to forgive does not mean that what happened no longer matters. It does matter, or it wouldn't need forgiveness. Forgiveness also doesn't mean that the memory is pushed into oblivion, but rather that even though the memory and perhaps some of the pain remains, it will not affect your perspective or your happiness.

Forgiveness is not a feeling, it's a choice. You don't forgive someone because you feel like it; you forgive them because you choose to heal and move past it. And when you forgive, you often find that positive feelings like relief and peace are a result.

An antidote

Forgiveness is not about what someone did to you; and the issues of what, why, when, where, or how need not influence your resolve. Forgiveness is about Me and you. It's about My having the power to heal and restore your spirit, and your making the choice to use the healing agent that I make available to you.

Forgiveness is an antidote to the poisons of loss, harm, sin, and sorrow. Drink it fully, even if it looks like the most bitter of cures. It will end your pain more quickly and lastingly than anything else. Those who drink this potion will find their wounds healing and their life and joy returning.

The greatest benefit and blessing of forgiveness belongs to the person who forgives. There are other spiritual and emotional aids that can help one whose life has been harmed by the wrongdoing or evil of another; but there is no substitute for forgiveness, and there is nothing else that brings the same level of profound spiritual cleansing and healing into your life. When you are wronged or harmed, your spirit suffers damage and needs restoration. When you have been harmed by the wrongs or mistakes of others—no matter what the complexities and nuances—the solution is wrapped in the package of forgiveness.

You have suffered enough, you have lost enough, and there has been enough pain. Choose forgiveness, give forgiveness, and let Me heal you.

A steppingstone

Forgiveness is a steppingstone to something more powerful, far reaching, and long lasting—peace of mind and heart, and a special contentment I give to those who let go in this way. As forgiveness takes root in your life, the pain and sorrow caused by what has happened will no longer oppress you, and you will be freed from resentment and ill will or hatred toward those who have wronged you.





A portal to heaven

When you chose to receive Me into your life, you didn't work it up. All you had to do was say, "I accept." Choosing to forgive is very much the same. By making that choice, you are choosing to open yourself up to receive a supernatural and miraculous gift from the heavenly realm.

Human love is not strong enough on its own to completely forgive, no matter how hard one tries. Getting past the hurt and moving on is a wonderful thing, but to truly forgive takes supernatural love. So ask Me for it and receive it. My love is a beautiful and life-changing gift, but one that is asked for far too rarely.

Forgiveness is not mind over matter; it is heart over matter—My heart. Forgiveness is the opening of a portal to heaven, through which flow love, redemption, cleansing, healing, restoration, and renewal.



Divine

The power to forgive is one of the noblest powers given to man. It's part of the nature and essence of God, and when you exercise it you assume godlike stature. You have the power to forgive and thus rise above your own nature.

Choosing to forgive another is hard, especially if you feel like the forgiveness is undeserved. It's hard because it's not human nature. Human nature cries out for revenge and retribution. But why limit yourself to human nature?

I came to bring forgiveness and salvation from sin, but I also came to save you from human nature. When you accept Me as your Savior, you receive a measure of My superhuman nature. Once you've received Me, how much that superhuman nature rules in your life is up to you, and that is reflected in your choices.

Whether that person who wronged you deserves forgiveness is not the central issue. No one really deserves forgiveness. If someone has done wrong, they deserve a just punishment. But forgiveness is greater than justice. Justice is human; forgiveness is divine.

A miracle

When you or someone dear to you has suffered a terrible tragedy, it can be hard to believe that forgiveness is possible. It doesn't feel as though the act of forgiving will bring healing, closure, and understanding. A child who was hit and killed by a drunken driver will not be in your arms again in this life; a loved one who became handicapped due to the mistakes or negligence of another may never be physically whole in this life; even a lost opportunity, a financial disaster, slander or lies spread around that have severely affected your life and opportunities—all of these, and more, are things that “sorry doesn't fix.” You feel gutted, and it's hard to envision being whole again.

I know how difficult it is in such circumstances to believe that forgiveness will heal your heart, because you know it won't change the circumstances or turn back time. Nevertheless, forgiveness will take the hurt, the tragedy, the harm, and the pain in your heart, and cover it all with My healing balm. You won't be the same as before the hurt, but you will become whole again, with a stronger heart filled with the deep peace that forgiveness brings.

Therapy

Forgiveness rescues your soul and saves your spiritual life. When you forgive, you are saying, “I choose to forgive so that I can heal—and in so doing I protect my spirit.” Forgiveness allows the hurt to mend, stops it from further damaging you, and gives you space to heal and reverse the damage.

Although your hurt is great, forgive anyway. What originally hurt you will continue to hurt you, and will always go on hurting you, until you have forgiven the perpetrator. The more you resent someone, the more what they did will hurt you. Untreated, this wound will never close, and its poison will infect your life. Perhaps much has been taken from you; don't lose what you have left. Take back your life and reclaim your happiness. Do this by choosing to forgive.



CHAPTER TWO

Forgiveness — What for?



Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

—Luke 6:36-37

Blessings

In the Sermon on the Mount, I stated, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”¹

The meekness referred to here is an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward men. If you are meek and merciful, you won’t hold a grudge or feel you can judge another; you will be compassionate and understanding. If you are a peacemaker, you will be actively seeking to make peace, starting with seeking forgiveness yourself and forgiving others.

Think about the benefits I promised you would gain: If you’re meek you will inherit the earth; if you’re merciful you will receive mercy; if you’re a peacemaker you will be called a child of God.

1. Matthew 5:5,7,9 NIV



Healing

Deciding to forgive when you have been hurt or wronged is difficult and painful because you are associating the injury with the forgiveness. If you forgive, it can feel as if you're saying you're okay with someone's actions that caused you pain. But that's not the case. You can reach out and forgive, even if you can't condone the actions that need forgiving.

What's important is that you don't hold on to the anger and let it brew and fester inside your heart. Don't put forgiveness on one side of the scale and the pain on the other. It will never be "fair." That's not really the point. The forgiving is for you. Extending forgiveness is how your wounded spirit will be healed.

Your time in this world is fleeting. Why spend it repeatedly reliving the details of how a situation hurt you? If you knew you had the opportunity to be free from all the heartache you are now experiencing, wouldn't you take it?

You can. Ask Me to help you put it behind you and to supernaturally transcend the physical, human, natural reaction to keep reviewing it. As you forgive others, I help you. I heal your heart's wounds and I soothe your pain. I truly do make things all better.

Closure

What if the person who hurt you has never apologized or shown signs of being sorry for what he did? Forgiveness is for you and your heart and spirit, and whether the other person has sought to make amends or not does not determine your choice to forgive.

The alternative to choosing forgiveness and letting it bring healing and closure is to allow yourself to become a victim of your circumstances. Your spirit will be wounded, your mind will remain troubled, and your heart will not be whole. Forgiving those who do not seek forgiveness may go completely against what your mind and heart are telling you. But the forgiveness you extend will benefit you, and allow you to find healing, closure, and peace.

To lose the hurt

Your hurt feelings are like a boulder perched atop a steep cliff, heavy, imposing, and seemingly immovable. But when you apply forgiveness, you're nudging it with an irresistible force that will set it in motion rolling down the slopes. There might not be a big overnight change, the mass of resentment and distrust may take a while to gain momentum; but once it starts moving, it will gather speed until it disappears out of sight.



Insurance

One of the reasons why forgiveness is the better option is that when you give it to others, you will reap the benefits yourself sooner or later. There isn't anyone who doesn't make mistakes and who won't need forgiveness at one point or another, and those who are willing to extend it will receive it in return.

This is the promise that I gave when I was on earth, and it holds true for you today as well: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven."¹ If you forgive others, I will forgive you. If you show mercy, mercy will be shown to you.

Insure yourself against the anguish and agony of feeling unforgiven in the future by willingly forgiving others today.

1. Luke 6:37 ESV

Renewal

I know how hard it is to forgive, to make that choice even though you feel you have been stripped of everything and left empty. But forgiving is what will renew your spirit. It's a sign of strength of character and often requires mustering all the inner courage you have and leaning hard on Me for the strength you cannot find in yourself.

Before you make the choice to forgive, it probably seems impossible. But it's not impossible, because I have limitless love and strength to give you. I want you to forgive because I want you to heal, I want you to be happy again, and I want you to grow stronger through the experience.

I have great compassion for you when you face the choice of whether to forgive or not. I know how hard it is. But I also know how beautiful your life will be and what strength of character will result when you make that choice. So lean hard on Me, and find that I'm always there to help you be strong.





A fresh start

When you see what resentment is costing you, you can see the personal benefits of forgiveness. It may feel good or “right” at first to harbor feelings of resentment, thinking that you don’t deserve to be treated that way, and that you would never do such a thing to anyone else. But the more you dwell on an offense and how wrong it was, the more the hurt is magnified and the more of your joy and peace it steals away. You find yourself under a dark cloud overshadowing your life.

It’s not only the original offense that is causing the cloud. Lack of forgiveness is adding to it and making it darker and heavier. It’s difficult to take the steps to forgive, but it’s worth it, to get back into the sunshine.

A turnaround

There is a vengeful part of human nature that wants to see the offending parties suffer as you've suffered, to see some kind of pain inflicted on the guilty parties for what they've done. When you don't forgive and move on, you're keeping the painful memory alive and continually dangling it in front of others, hoping to remind them of what they did and make them feel bad for it.

This approach robs you of your own happiness. Instead of drawing on My supply of peace and contentment to help you get back on your feet after you have been wronged, you cause yourself to remain miserable and angry, a state that often hurts you much more than it does the other party. It's difficult to regain your own happiness while trying to deprive someone else of theirs.

It hurts Me to see you continue to suffer needlessly, but the decision is yours. Will you continue to hold on to the pain and the feeling of having been wronged, which will eat at your happiness and ensure that you keep feeling wretched and irritated? Or will you forgive, allowing Me to renew your happiness and zest for life?



Beauty for ashes

Your experiences in life, and the choices you make through them, make you into what you are now and what you will be in the future. The loss, sadness, and difficulty you endure can make you a better person—someone with more depth, more love, and more understanding. It enables you to empathize with others and their pain. However, if you don't forgive when you are hurt, and instead become resentful and bitter, then you miss out on what My Word calls beauty in place of ashes. The effects instead are negative, and they can have an unhealthy effect on your life.

When you forgive others, you are not saying that you have forgotten the bad that they have done, but you are saying that you are not holding it against them. You are saying that you are willing to move on.

The Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the
captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to
proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all who mourn,
To console those who mourn, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of
joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.
—Jesus, Isaiah 61:1–3

Yourself

The court is in session; the prosecution and the defense have both rested their cases. The accusations are severe. You are the wronged party and the judge; the verdict is in your hands. The audience waits with bated breath.

The case is obvious: the accused, fettered and bent in torment, is clearly guilty, and justice must be served. You raise the gavel, prepared to dispense justice.

Suddenly, there is a cry from somewhere in the court. “Have mercy!” the voice pleads. “Forgive.”

Perplexed, you stop to ponder. This makes no sense; the accused is obviously guilty and must pay.

Then you feel a stirring in your heart. You remember all the times you have been guilty, the times you were in the wrong. You remember that there was One who stepped forward in your defense and pleaded that you be forgiven. You realize that you have a debt toward Him, and while it can never be fully repaid, this is an opportunity to partially repay that debt by extending the same mercy that once was shown to you.

You know what you must do. You pronounce three words that will change the life of the accused forever: “I forgive you.”

The prisoner looks up and smiles in dumbfounded relief. You look into the tear-stained face in front of you and recognize the person who has been set free through your act of forgiveness. You see yourself.

CHAPTER THREE

Forgiveness — How?



Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

—Ephesians 4:32

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.

—Proverbs 3:3-4

Trust in My love

No matter what has happened to you, I can make things right again. “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). You don’t have to know why things happened as they did or how I will bring good from the situation. You don’t have to understand My actions or seeming lack of action; you only have to trust that I am love, that I do all things well, and that “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”¹

If all you can do is repeat “God is love,”² progress will start there. The knowledge that I am by your side, that I love you, and that I care for you, is a matter of trust, an understanding in your heart that I am the God of the universe, and that I am eternal, unconditional love. If you trust in My love and My ability to make all things right, it will give you strength to forgive. “Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”³

1. *Hebrews 13:5*

2. *1 John 4:16*

3. *Isaiah 40:31 NLT*



Let the pain make you sweeter

The next time your heart aches from something that was done to you, I want you to picture yourself removing a thorn from your heart and giving it to Me. Then picture My loving hands gently healing the sore place in your heart where the thorn had been. I will use the experience to make you into a better person than you were before, with greater understanding and compassion and depth of character.

I understand what you've been through. I was with you through the experience. I saw what happened and how it made you feel, and I understand how it has hurt you. I understand because I lived on earth and went through similar things. But you don't have to let your pain drag you into an abyss of despair and hurt. Please don't! Instead, let Me fill your heart with an understanding that will override your hurt and take you to higher ground. My love, understanding, and compassion are always there for you.

Accept My help. Let Me free you from the prison of resentment and anger and pain. I want to show you how much I love you and that I am there for you no matter what. Open your heart and let My love and light come in.



Take a closer look

When you're in the throes of a disagreement, you might feel overwhelmed by negative feelings. They well up inside and fester until you can't hold them in any longer. When you feel anger, hurt, and resentment about the actions of another, it can seem almost impossible to control your response. You might end up uttering harsh words, making threats, or taking action that you feel bad about afterwards. On the other hand, you also feel justified, because after all, you were the one who was wronged. It was the other person's fault in the first place, and they deserved what they got.

But that's not always the whole picture. In some cases you may need to think back to the moment the problem started and consider whether perhaps you played some part in it. Be honest with yourself. Did you give them the benefit of the doubt before reacting? Did you react out of anger? Was there something you said or did that provoked them? Did you even purposely do or say something you knew they wouldn't like?

No matter who was at fault and no matter how difficult it is, you can make the first step and extend the hand of peace and friendship. It may be hard and it may even feel like death, but when you make that first move, you are a victor in My eyes.

Drop the grudge

Holding a grudge does no one any good. A grudge negatively affects everyone involved, and the longer it's held the more damage it causes. The good news, however, is that it's never too late to set things straight.

It may not seem this way sometimes, but most people don't want to go through life hurting others, and many hurts are not intentional. Grudges are often the result of misunderstandings. It makes Me sad to see people alienated from one another for months or years over some misunderstanding that could have been sorted out sooner if even one of the parties had shown love and understanding and humility.

It takes a big person to be humble enough to be the first to let go of a grudge. If you ask Me to give you the love and humility you need to start forgiving the other person, I will help you to set aside your animosity and ill will.

Turn over a new leaf

Resolve never to bring up problems from the past except to ask for or to extend forgiveness. Don't think about yesterday's problems or slipups or failings—just like I don't remember your failings or shortcomings. My mercies are renewed every morning.¹ I love you anew each day, and I want you to extend the same love and mercy to others.

1. Lamentations 3:22-23

Make a move

Humbling yourself to take the first step toward reconciliation when you are strongly convinced that what happened was not your fault goes against human nature. It doesn't seem fair or right. But hanging on to that attitude, as natural and human as it is, often results in a stalemate: both parties are upset, and because both feel justified, neither will make the first move to end it.

The longer this goes on, the higher and wider the barrier between you becomes. This is especially sad when it's affecting a close relationship—a spouse, a parent, a child, a sibling, a friend. So what can you do?

Don't let pride rule. Who was wrong or who was right doesn't matter nearly as much as preserving and nurturing a relationship. If you are at odds with someone, if you aren't on speaking terms, if anger or resentment is burning in your heart, then you are hurting each other and yourselves. Be the stronger person; ask forgiveness for allowing your anger to build a wall between you.

Be sincere, and open the door for My love to go to work. It really won't be as hard as you fear.



Defuse anger

Love begets love; kindness begets kindness; forgiveness begets forgiveness; and approaching things in a humble, loving spirit will help your partner to respond in like manner.

Before nightfall

You have probably experienced how difficult it can be to have a peaceful night of sleep when your anger or emotions are getting the better of you and you haven't made things right with your loved one. "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath."¹ The time before you go to sleep is one of the best times to make up with your spouse if something happened that day that was upsetting to either or both of you.

This may not entail going over the details just yet, as sometimes that gets a bit complicated and takes longer than you intended. But a simple apology and an assurance of your love will go a long way toward defusing the situation, which can be addressed in more depth at another time if either of you feels it is still unresolved.

Why toss and turn and fume, when you could make things right? You'll sleep better and you'll both feel better the next day.

1. Ephesians 4:26

Forget the past

The past can be like a mob of ghosts that hounds you, following you wherever you go, reminding you of old hurts and the mistakes of others, causing you to feel angry and resentful. Many people want to lose these ghosts, but they can't shake off the pain or anger they felt—and still feel.

I have good news. I am the ultimate ghost buster, and I can be effective against the vaporous ghouls from days past. Let's turn around together, turn on the light, and face them head-on. Oh, they will try to hide in some dark corner. Or when found, they will try their hardest to bring up reasons why they shouldn't be banished. But your determined resolve to forgive, empowered by Me, will chase these specters away.

Forgiveness opens the door to a bright and cheery future, one in which you can live happily, no longer haunted by the ghosts of the past and the misery they bring. Forgiveness is closing the door on past events, and anticipating the happiness and joy of the future.





Treat the wounds

A concealed and unforgiven hurt never gets better on its own; it requires the soothing balm of forgiveness to bring deep healing and peace. Let Me quench the fire in your heart. Choosing to forgive does not mean brushing aside a very painful wound; rather it's acknowledging that you are hurt and treating the wound to allow it to heal. Don't try to close the wound without forgiving, for the longer you wait, the deeper it will burn, and the harder it will become to heal.

Forgiving isn't passive retreat; it's a positive move forward, advancing toward becoming whole. Forgiving is initially harder than just burying the pain deep inside; it is also the braver and nobler thing to do, and it will allow Me to start healing you. Sometimes you look at the wounds and hurts you've received and you think that bearing them bravely is just part of life. But I don't want you to have to continue to bear them at all! Please let Me heal you!



Trade yokes

Anger and hostility can be like a heavy yoke around your neck. But I say to you what I said to My disciples long ago: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”¹ I was telling them that if they were burdened about something they could come to Me and I would take that heavy yoke off and give them a lighter one, one that would fit them better and that they could carry more easily. By trading their yoke with Mine, their souls would find rest because My burdens are light and easy to bear.

So if you are carrying a weighty yoke of anger or resentment toward someone, and you’re having a hard time forgiving others for what they have done, ask Me to take that burden off and replace it with the far lighter yoke of mercy, love, and forgiveness. I can give you the desire to be reconciled and the strength to extend the hand of forgiveness and friendship.

1. Matthew 11:28,30



Wear their shoes

Think of a time when you messed up. Think of how bad you felt or the discouragement that hung over you. Remember the shame, the remorse, the feeling of failure? Remember how all you wanted to do was crawl under the bed and hide?

Now put yourself in the place of the person who has just messed up and needs your forgiveness. Determine to give it to them, much like you wanted it for yourself at the time of your blunder. You may or may not have received forgiveness at the time, but you can certainly remember how much you needed it. You have the chance to be an angel of mercy. Seize it!

A wise assumption

Give others the benefit of the doubt, because not everything is the way it might seem at the time.



Ignore the inconsequential

Little things others do can often be annoying, and if repeated over a long period, these can cause major problems if you let them. If there's something that comes up regularly and is negatively affecting your happiness or your relationship with someone, then it is probably a good idea to talk about it with them. On the other hand, if you make the effort to look at it objectively and realize that it's not so important, or if it's something they really can't help, why not simply decide that you're not going to let it get to you? Choose not to sweat the small stuff. It's not worth your energy, and it's certainly not worth letting it rob you of your happiness or peace.

Think about something you like about the other person, a positive trait he has, or something she does to make others' lives better. "Love covers a multitude of sins,"¹ mistakes, and idiosyncrasies. Consider that you've probably got some of your own that others put up with. So do the same for them. "Do to others as you would like them to do to you."²

1. 1 Peter 4:8 NLT

2. Luke 6:31 NLT



See the doctor

If a tumor of bitterness or resentment has begun to grow near your heart and is spreading to other parts of your spirit, causing you pain and affecting your peace of mind, quality of life, and relationships with others, you can start the healing process by checking in at My clinic.

Forgiving is like having spiritual surgery on your soul. It's cutting out the tumor and freeing yourself of its cancerous intrusions on your heart and life. Surgery is often very difficult and a lot of care has to be taken in the recovery process. It takes time—sometimes lots of it—to recover from an operation, and sometimes it takes more than one intervention to fully fix the problem. Healing from soul surgery can also take a long time and can seem tedious. But the alternative is far worse.

I am the doctor who has promised to make you whole. I have all the skill and instruments to tend to every wound, to mend what has been broken and restore what was damaged. So bring your hurts to Me, and I will put you on the path of recovery.

Break the chain

Disappointments, disagreements, unfairness, oversights, hurtful deeds or words—all of these things can be likened to links in a chain. Each time one of these situations comes up, you have the choice to let go of the link or hang on to it and connect it to other links you have stored up. If you choose to hold on, then a chain—sometimes a very long and bulky chain—is forged over time.

This chain becomes cumbersome and heavy, and it begins to leave deep marks and lingering soreness on your psyche. Eventually, it crowds out any joy and goodness and makes your life a misery. The longer the chain gets, the harder it is to be free of it, and the easier it is to add more and more links. You become a captive to your hurts, sorrows, and every negative element of your past.

One of the reasons I was sent to earth was “to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and ... to set at liberty those who [were] oppressed,”¹ and this still applies to you today. I have the power to break the shackles. When the chains that bend your neck under their weight are gone, you are able to look up and see the beauty around you. Without the chains that encumber your arms, those arms are free to be lifted in praise for the blessings that I have placed in your life. The bliss of freedom is infinitely more valuable than the hollow gratification of nursing your indignations.

1. Luke 4:18



Drop the potatoes

The story is told of an old man who was trudging along the road carrying a heavy sack of potatoes. A neighbor passing by in a cart offered him a lift, which he gladly accepted. But even as the old man rode, he held the sack of potatoes up on his shoulder. When his neighbor suggested that he put down the heavy sack, he replied, “No thanks. Your cart carries me, but let me at least carry the potatoes.” He believed he was helping out by continuing to bear the weight of his burden.

Don’t be like that foolish man. I can carry you, “potatoes” and all. You don’t have to bear anything alone. If you’re having a hard time forgiving someone, if you don’t feel capable or you’re not even sure you really want to forgive, give your hurts to Me. Climb onto My cart and put the weight down by committing it to Me in prayer. And then leave it in the cart with Me.



Follow the steps

Some people are able to forgive all at once, as a miraculous change; but for most, it is a process. It starts with the wish to forgive, even if you can't back that with a strong resolve; then you must allow Me to take the hurt from you. You may sometimes feel as though nothing has happened and that you might have to start over. Don't worry if that happens. Don't think you've failed if you don't "feel" the forgiveness. If you don't feel a rush of relief, or affection for the person you are forgiving, or instantaneous happiness, or even the feeling of being back to normal, it doesn't mean you haven't forgiven them.

Even if you don't feel you have it in you to forgive and you don't feel warm and fuzzy about it, when you make the decision to forgive, I go to work in your heart. I lift the burdens and the hurt and begin the healing process in your heart. But sometimes it takes time. Sometimes it takes repeating the affirmation that you forgive. Eventually I do complete the healing of your heart and make you happy and whole again.

CHAPTER FOUR

God's Forgiveness



Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
—Isaiah 1:18

As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.
—Psalm 103:11-12

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
—1 John 1:9



It is infinite

You're bound to make wrong choices sometimes because you're human, but I still love you. If I were to love only perfect people, there wouldn't be anyone for Me to love, because everyone falls short at times. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). There is no one who does everything right all the time. I don't ask or expect perfection of you.

It saddens Me when you willfully do wrong, but I don't hold it against you if you are sincerely sorry. Instead, I extend My arms in forgiveness and draw you close to Me. My forgiveness is a manifestation of My love for you.

You may still have to live with the consequences of your wrongdoing, but once you ask Me for forgiveness, I forgive. It's that simple!

Where you go from there is up to you. It largely depends on your desire to change and your determination to leave behind the things of the past so you can move forward in My love. When you fall, I will always be there to pick you up. My loving help, like My forgiveness, is endless.



I've been there

I know what it's like to be wrongfully hurt. It was very unfair for Me to be tortured and put to death though I had committed no crime. I brought love, kindness, and healing to all those I met in My life on earth; yet I was made to suffer excruciating abuse and humiliating indignity.

I didn't feel like forgiving the crowd for humiliating and mocking Me, or those in power for condemning an innocent man, or the soldiers for making a sport of the execution and putting Me through the pain of torture before death. I had committed no crime. "Father, forgive them"¹ were some of the most difficult words I ever said in My life on earth. My own disciples abandoned and denied Me and fled in My hour of greatest need, but I forgave them too.

My love was not selective. It was for all. And throughout history, I have accepted and forgiven everyone who has come to Me. My forgiveness is always available for you to share in, and My supernatural power to forgive is always available for you to draw on.

1. Luke 23:34



Forever love

We began a very special relationship when you asked Me into your heart and told Me you wanted Me to be a part of your life. You may not have felt a surge of emotion, but it was a great event just the same.

I came into your heart and life, just as you asked Me to, and I will never ever leave you. You will still have problems, but I want to help you through them. You will make mistakes, but those won't come between us. Do you know why? Because I died to release you from the burden of your mistakes. I took your punishment for all of that.

When you accepted Me, you accepted My forgiveness. You may not have even understood it at the time, but rest assured that I have forgiven you for past wrongs, present wrongs, and even future wrongs that are bound to come.

The closer you stay to Me, the more I can do for you. But no matter what happens, be assured that I will never leave you. You can be secure in My love. I love you forever.



I am love

In times of darkness, I will be your light. In times of sadness, I will be your joy. In times of struggle, I will be your deliverance. In times of weakness, I will be your strength. In times of question, I will be your answer. In times of doubt, I will be your faith. And more important than any of this, I am love for you. I love you and I forgive you.

So do not be discouraged or disheartened. Do not look back. Do not be remorseful over the mistakes and sins of the past, for the past is the past. I have covered those mistakes and sins, and that which was scarlet shall be made white as snow. As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed your sins from you.

In the very moment that you seek My forgiveness, in the very instant that you call out to Me, I immediately grant My forgiveness, and there is no more need to worry or fear or carry the burden yourself.



All is forgiven

If you were to stand before Me now, you would be so engulfed and overwhelmed by My love that all the hurts and pain and misunderstandings of the past and the present would completely vanish. So great is My love for you that it leaves no room for sorrow or condemnation. If you were standing before Me, you would feel only total acceptance and total love, because you would know that all is forgiven. There is no fear with Me. I wash away all fear, and there is no fear in My love.

Even though you are still in human flesh, trust that My love for you is no less at this moment than it will be when you will arrive here and stand before Me. I am no further away now, and you are every bit as much in My presence. You are just as much forgiven and there is nothing held against you. You are My dear one, My beloved.



Clean slate

When I wipe the slate clean, it truly is perfectly clean, as white as snow. My love is heavenly and transcends earthly reason. I do judge and reward according to your actions on earth, but My love is still paramount. I would never make you feel unloved for some past mistake, no matter how great. I would never want you to feel beyond My forgiveness, because you never are.

No matter what you've done, when it happened, who was involved, or anything else, I do not condemn or reject you, and I cannot ever turn away from you. I love you more than anything in this world, and there is nothing that could take you away from Me.

Remorse can make you feel so small and lonely, as if there's no point in going on; but in those times of despair and anguish, I will always remain by your side, to comfort and hold you. There is no sin so great, no deed so horrible, that it is past My power to forgive. Nor do I forgive you only once or twice and then throw in the towel and give up on you. My unconditional love and forgiveness are available to you as often as you need them and come to Me for them.

Unchanging

Sometimes people forget that I have feelings. It hurts Me every time someone chooses to turn away from Me. It causes Me pain when people cause pain to others or hurt part of My creation.

But does it change My love for each of you? No. When I came to earth I knew full well that many would hate, malign, mock, and hurt Me, and that in the end I would be put to death, but I forgave. Why? Because I am love, and love is so much greater than hate, cruelty, and bitterness.

I came to earth in part because I needed you to know that I understand what it is like to be human and to experience what you go through. I understand and I have compassion for you, as I know that it's not easy to be human. I understand that human nature is hard to deal with, and I forgive you. I forgive you for every mistake you have ever made, and every mistake you will ever make. In fact, I go one step further: I forget your mistakes altogether. I forgive you for them, and I don't remember them anymore, because I love you.



CHAPTER FIVE

When Forgiveness Is Especially Difficult ...



Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

—Matthew 18:21-22

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

—Colossians 3:13 NIV

Press on

Picture yourself walking down the road of life. As you walk along, you meet other travelers, and get close to some of them. One day one of your fellow travelers hurts you. You stop walking, surprised, and decide that you don't want to go any farther without protection. So you find armor to wear, and though you feel safer in it, you are now walking a lot more slowly, because the armor is heavy. Soon, you feel that this armor isn't enough, and you decide that it would be much safer if you stopped traveling and built some walls to protect you from any other possible hurt.

So your journey stops. Even though it was someone else who caused you the hurt, it is your journey that came to a halt when you decided to hold on to that hurt. And it was you who decided to stop going forward in your travels.

Some people do this, and then don't resume their journey down the road of life, choosing instead to stay in their little fort on the side of the road, all alone, never allowing anyone to come close to them or to persuade them to step out of their fortress and start traveling again.

Come with Me, My friend. I'll walk with you down the road, and I'll protect you. Yes, some things may still hurt, but they won't get in the way of our journey. Just forgive and let go. Leave the journey of the person who has hurt you in My hands, and look ahead to the beautiful new future that we will enjoy together.





Say the words

Forgiveness is not a passive act; it requires action. Try saying “I forgive” out loud—not necessarily directly to the one that hurt you; even if you only say it to yourself, it confirms that you are taking that stand. “I forgive you. It hurts, and I don’t like it, but I forgive you.” If you continue with this exercise, and continue to take this stand each time the pain resurfaces, the time will come when you will no longer be dragged into mulling over the situation. You will be able to look at each painful situation as a catapult that propelled you to new heights of faith, love, and peace.



See it come back

There are times when the person who has hurt you isn't remorseful and doesn't seem to deserve forgiveness. But forgiveness has nothing to do with fairness or justice. It is a matter of love—divine love. The love that empowered Me to come to earth, to suffer and die for you, to extend forgiveness for your mistakes, is the same love that can empower you to forgive in turn.

People reap what they sow, and if you sow mercy, you will receive mercy. If you sow love and forgiveness, even when it is difficult to do so, you will receive the same.

Follow My heart

I understand how difficult it is when the one who has wronged you isn't the least bit sorry or apologetic. Consider what happened to Me.

At My trial, the mob—many of whom had witnessed My miracles and good deeds and welcomed Me into Jerusalem just a few days before—shouted out for Me to be crucified. The leaders of My own nation demanded My death. The Roman governor, knowing that I was innocent, ordered My execution. The soldiers tortured Me and nailed Me to the cross. Even most of My closest friends deserted Me. Peter denied three times that he even knew Me. But I died for the sins of everyone, including My tormentors, and I forgave them all.

You could choose to remain angry, but you also have the choice to follow My example and forgive those who harm you—not because they deserve it, but because when you forgive you are a better person, and a happier, healthier one, too, than you were. You are a true imitation of Me, for My heart always forgives.

Tried and proven

The most powerful testimony of the first Christians was their forgiveness—their ability to face cruel and unjust deaths, even to watch their loved ones die at the hands of their persecutors, and yet forgive. The more cruelly their oppressors persecuted them, the more apparent was their forgiveness. This previously unheard-of ability and willingness to forgive caused many people to believe in Me.

Receive supernatural peace

No amount of analyzing, no sorting through right and wrong, no attempt to tally up and apportion blame, nor the anguish of heart, the anger, or the bewilderment will ever bring the answers that your mind and heart seek. If you choose to forgive, you invite Me in to begin the healing process in your heart, mind, and spirit.

This place of forgiveness is not a place you reach through reasoning or waiting for time to work things out. In fact, time can work against you, as the longer you remain troubled and the longer you harbor any resentment or anger, the more difficult it is to forgive. But you can count on My help and on the peace that I give to those who trust in Me.

Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
—Philippians 4:7 NLT





Transcend nature

Why would you forgive someone who...

number one, greatly wronged you;
number two, doesn't deserve to be forgiven;
number three, isn't sorry enough;
number four, is not behaving in the way you think he or she should;
and number five, is so terribly wrong?

There are always plenty of “reasons” not to forgive. Forgiveness can be extremely difficult even when the offender expresses regret and tries to make amends. It's unreasonable, illogical, and in diametric opposition to human nature. Forgiveness isn't about being convinced by facts and figures, nor can it always be achieved by psyching yourself up to do it. The more you mull it over and build up your case in your mind, the harder it will be to forgive.

The way to find the strength to forgive is to stop focusing on the circumstances and particulars of who and what are to blame and focus instead on making peace with Me and others.




Fix your future

Why are you to forgive others when you have been so horribly hurt and wronged by their actions? Why would you let them off the hook like that? Shouldn't they be on the spot, the ones having to make things right and doing everything they can to somehow try—maybe over years, or maybe forever—to make amends for what they've done?

The most important thing to understand about forgiving is that this isn't about the other party; this is about you. The reason I ask you to forgive, no matter what the hurt, is not only because the other person needs your forgiveness, but because you need to forgive.

Forgiving the other person helps you. Forgiving is the biggest step you can make in leaving the past behind. If you don't forgive someone, then you become stuck. You are held back. You are the one suffering, and you are the one feeling angry, bitter, and in some cases, even hateful. These feelings can eat you up. They don't help you. They make you miserable, and in some cases these feelings will even alter your personality and the way you relate to others. Holding on to anger, bitterness, and resentment hurts you.

A vertical strip on the left side of the page shows a warm, golden sunset or sunrise. A small bird is captured in flight against the bright light near the top of the strip. The rest of the page has a plain white background.

Forgiveness helps you, because it allows you to let go of all that and to move on. Forgiveness won't change the past, but if you can extend forgiveness, it does fix the future.

Forgiveness immediately begins to work as an agent of positive change—one which can, in time, reverse all the damage and set everything right again. Forgiveness is the key that helps the wrong of another not to become your wrong as well, and that saves your heart and spirit from the damage caused by not forgiving, regardless of what other damage you have sustained.

If you choose not to forgive, it is as if the harm touches your spirit as well, and the hurt you've experienced begins to poison your soul. But if you forgive, any damage done to you can be reversed and driven back, and in time you will be able to rise above anything.

Be like Me

Forgiving goes contrary to natural feelings and inclinations. People feel they know what is right or wrong and judge others when they fall short. But when I came to earth, I taught My followers to “forgive men their trespasses.”¹

Forgiveness does not come easily to most people; it’s a conflict within their hearts and minds. It goes against their sense of what is right and fair and just. That is why it is so hard to forgive, and that is also why forgiveness is divine. It is a touch of the love of heaven—My love. My love that loves you no matter what and that continues to have faith in you no matter how many mistakes—large or small—you have made.

Forgiving someone doesn’t make that person or their actions right. When you forgive, it doesn’t free the other person from the responsibility of what they did, though in time it will free you from the hurt and pain you feel.

1. Matthew 6:14



It's all about you!

It's not about the other person. Whether or not they ask for forgiveness, whether or not they are remorseful, and whether or not they change their ways are not the core issues. If you aren't able to forgive, you are the one who will suffer the most in the long run.

There are times when other people will hurt you—whether intentionally or unintentionally. People may treat you unfairly on occasion, deceive you; perhaps steal from you or slander you, speaking behind your back. They may cheat you or they may break their word. Whatever the case may be, whatever the offense, whatever the hurt, if you do not forgive them, and you keep dwelling on the hurt that they have caused you, you are basing your happiness on their decisions, and you are in essence being held hostage to their will or actions. “If they change, I will forgive them.” “If they're sorry and ask for forgiveness, I'll do the right thing.” “If they realize the pain they've caused me, then I can move on.” In the meantime, you allow an unforgiving attitude to weave its way into the fabric of your life.



What if they never realize what they've done, or they never change? Will you hold on to the hurt forever? Will you allow yourself to continue getting eaten up from the inside? If so, you'll be the one who's losing out—not them. On the other hand, choosing to forgive is taking charge of your life. You can't determine the circumstances, but you can determine your reaction. So take control of your own life and your personal growth and development, and don't allow your emotions and well-being to be controlled by others' decisions or past actions.

Bring your hurt and pain to Me and allow Me to wash you clean. Accept My help and start taking steps today to forgive and forget. I know it won't be easy, and it may take a while. But this is the only way you will be able to move forward in your life and regain the happiness and peace that you desire.

It's all about us

Forgiving someone who has hurt you deeply or negatively affected your life in a serious way is an act of superhuman proportions. It may be one of the hardest things you will ever do. But once you have made the decision to forgive—even if all you can muster is the desire to make that decision—the liberating power of this act will become apparent to you. You're expressing—in words or in your heart—that something sad or difficult or even terrible has happened to you, and although you don't like it, agree with it, or want it, you choose to forgive the person who caused it, to forsake any anger toward them, and to act as though they owe you nothing, because you are erasing the debt they have to you.

Although you may remember for some time, you will not resent. Although you will still feel pain for a while, you will not retaliate. Although you may be crushed and it will take time for your spirit to mend, you are surrendering to My love, and thus for God's sake, and for your own sake, you extend them forgiveness in the name of Christ, who also forgave you.

When you see it this way, it doesn't matter whether the other people are sorry, or whether they meant to do it or not, or whether they have made appropriate reparations or not. It was never about them. It's always been about you and Me.

Heart to heart: Prayers for forgiveness



Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.


Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.


Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

—Psalm 51:1–3,7,10–12



My hurt I know You understand,
Help me, Lord, to put it in Your hands.
Let me find comfort in Your face,
Take this pain, Lord, and erase.



Dear Lord, I have been hurt by one I love, and I don't know if I can let go of this pain. I need Your strength to live free of these feelings. Help me to remember the forgiveness that others have given me. Remind me of the love that You have for everyone, and how Your love is unconditional. And most of all, remind me of how You gave Your life to forgive me. Then give me the grace to forgive as well and let go.



Make me more like You, my God, more generous and kind, more understanding of others, and more forgiving. Help me never to forget that I, too, have wronged, and have caused hurt and pain to others. Help me to remember the forgiveness You have given me through Your sacrifice on the cross, as well as through the love and mercy of others, and give me the grace to share that forgiveness now with the one who has wronged me.



I want to forgive, but I cannot pretend to know how. It's more difficult than I thought it would be. While my reasons for hanging on to the hurt and bitterness may seem fair and justifiable, I know that You want me to forgive. Please help me to truly let go. I don't want to harbor any negative feelings toward another.

Fill me, as You have promised, with peace of mind, happiness, and a positive outlook. Transform me into someone full of kindness, acceptance, and love. You've forgiven me so many times, and so have others. Help me to do the same.



You once told a story about a man who had his massive debt written off by his lender, only to turn around and imprison others who owed him much, much less. In the end, though, he was treated the way he had treated others. Help me not to act like he did, but to extend mercy willingly without condition or hesitation to those whom I feel have done me wrong.

The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt...

...At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.”

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

—*Jesus, Matthew 18:23–35 NIV*

More Food for Thought



I—yes, I alone—will blot out your sins ... and will never think of them again.

—Isaiah 43:25 NLT

I will never again remember their sins.

—Hebrews 10:17 NLT

Our God, no one is like you. ... You freely forgive our sin and guilt. You don't stay angry forever; you're glad to have pity and pleased to be merciful. You will trample on our sins and throw them in the sea.

—Micah 7:18-19 CEV

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

—Mark 11:25 ESV

If you could easily forget the pain of the hurt, you would then too easily forget the beauty of the miracle of forgiveness.

The fact that it's an intense struggle to forgive is not a sign of weakness or hardness of heart. Rather it is an indication that deep in your heart there is a tender core where love is fighting to win over pride and bitterness.

Forgiveness allows the butterfly of your soul to escape from the cocoon of your past.

The happiest people in life are those who learn to forgive.

Your future begins where your grudge ends.

Refusing to forgive is letting someone else control your life.

Forgiveness is the key that unlocks your prison cell of resentment, hurt, and pain. You can only unlock the cell from the inside, and only you have the key.

The fruits hanging on the tree of forgiveness are happiness, healing, relief and peace—just waiting to be plucked by the choices we make to forgive.

A choice to forgive is a choice to love in spite of the pain.

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does positively alter the future.

Forgiveness is love, and if you love someone you can forgive them.

The one who gains the most from forgiveness is the for-giver, not the forgiven.

Forgiveness leaves the past behind and invests in the future, where everything is new.

Afterword

If you haven't yet experienced the kind of love expressed in these messages from Jesus, it may be that you haven't yet received His gifts of eternal love and life by accepting Him as your Savior. Jesus won't force Himself on you; He waits humbly for you to invite Him into your life. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). You can receive Him right now by sincerely praying a prayer like the following:

"Dear Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I can have eternal life. Please forgive me for every wrong and unloving thing I have ever done. Wash away all that, and help me to do better. I need Your love to fill and satisfy my heart. I want the life of heavenly happiness You have for me—here and now, and in Heaven hereafter. I open the door of my heart and ask You, Jesus, to come in. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. Amen."





