

The Forgiveness Journal



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THANK YOU

To Simone - Thank you for asking the question, “If this book would help just 5 people, would that be worth it, or do you need it to be a best seller?” That simple question made me realize that whether my assignment to write this is “just” for 5 ...or 5 million, doesn’t matter because every life changed matters to Christ, who “leaves the 99 to find the 1”.

To The Women of My Church “LifeGroup” who agreed to go through this material while I was in it’s first edit, THANK YOU!! Your insights, questions, struggles, and successes have filled my heart in a way I can not express in words. You have been a truly invaluable part of the process of this book! Mimi, Nancy, Lili, Maggie, Kris, and Sadie- I love you so much and am so grateful for you! (And voila! You are my first 6! So Simone’s mission = accomplished!)

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To my Family - mom, dad, stepmom, siblings, children, ex husband, and new significant other - Thank you for your love and the variety of ways you have loved me, cheered for me, and most of all FORGIVEN ME!! No one offers more forgiveness than family, especially one’s own children. **M.I.C.**, you 3 have seen the very worst parts of me, for which I am terribly ashamed and repentant. Thank you for loving your mom when I’m easy, and also when I’m a terrible mess. I adore you more than anyone on the planet and will never stop thanking God for giving me the honor of being your mom. I perpetually hope and work towards being a better and better mom, but thank you for your forgiveness for all the uncountable ways I’ve screwed up over the years. You 3 own my heart.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This tool is designed to take you through a journey of true forgiveness and healing. But here are a few notes to get you prepared for the journey so that you’ll have maximum success!

1. The weird margin on the right is for your notes (if you downloaded the “workbook” version of this book).
2. I recommend buying a notebook or journal to dedicate to your forgiveness process. This can bring up a lot of baggage that you may want to grapple with, or take to a counselor or therapist, or trusted Christian friend.
3. My larger book is called From Forgiveness to Healing and is divided into 3 parts.

PART 1: The Forgiveness Journal (what you are now reading)

PART 2: From Forgiveness to Healing

PART 3: The Theology of Forgiveness

The Forgiveness Journal will be forever FREE because I think it is that important. The full book can be purchased on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). OR (and this is my preference) it can be *listened* to on Patreon.com, or *downloaded* as a PDF on [patreon.com](https://www.patreon.com).

Look. In so many ways, forgiveness is really, really hard. If you don’t think so, then you’ve either not been much violated in this life, or you THINK you’ve forgiven when you haven’t, or you are a rare human who just really ‘gets it’ and is blessed by the Holy Spirit to forgive easily. But once we learn what forgiveness really is, and why it is so important, and HOW to do it correctly and thoroughly, and realize that forgiveness is not, itself, healing; rather it is an absolutely necessary STEP of the healing process, then it can actually become much, much easier, and even (dare I say) exciting to exercise!!

THE END FROM THE BEGINNING

Because I believe Forgiveness is so very important to us all, I am going to give you the end, right here at the start. This entire "Forgiveness Journal" book is written to explain how to get to THIS process. The reason I am going to give it to you at the start, and again towards the end, is because at a very rudimentary level, you may be able to begin putting it into practice today! By the power of the Holy Spirit, some readers may understand the following worksheet/process right away and can begin to use it, at least at a basic level. So, I don't want to make you wait to get to it as you read this short but fairly intense book.

However, I will also implore you to keep reading. What follows is not just an instruction guide to how to use this forgiveness process/worksheet. Rather, this book will walk you through the what, the why, and the how. And hopefully excite and inspire you to desire to forgive and actually begin using it to further Christ's Kingdom by way of your own growth and also by sharing His love and witnessing the miracles that often come as a direct result of forgiveness!

So with that, here is the worksheet you can begin using today (if it makes sense to you). But keep reading!

Now, I pray, with Paul in Romans 16:20, "That *The God Of All Peace* will soon crush Satan under your feet!"

Love, Joy, Peace and Success to you! ~Carolyn

THE FORGIVENESS JOURNAL - WORKSHEET

1. Who do you need to forgive?
2. What did they do (or not do) ... or, What are they doing (or not doing)?
3. What do you believe they have robbed from you?
4. How has their offense affected you?
5. Why does this hurt? / What pain did this cause?
6. What do you think your offender needs **to do** (apologize? Pay you back?), **or endure** (go to jail, go through the same pain they caused you?) **to 'make it right'?**

NOW IT IS TIME TO FORGIVE!!! And it is as simple as a prayer. You CAN OBEY Jesus and forgive your offender with a prayer. Please, for your own good, say your prayer or the prayer below **out loud**.

OBEDIENT FORGIVENESS CAN ACTUALLY BOIL DOWN TO A PRAYER (this is not magic. Its just a sample):

God, I still hurt, I'm still mad, I still have all sorts of stress and emotions concerning this violation. But in obedience, I ask you to forgive this person and don't hold this thing they've done to me, against them. I release them from any obligation to apologize, or make restitution, or anything else. Now that I've forgiven them in the spiritual realms and disarmed the enemy in my life and in that person's life over this particular violation, Holy Spirit, please work with me to heal and then also forgive them with compassion. The legal part is complete. I pray that you will wipe this offense off their record, and also minister to them in whatever way they need help and healing. Please bring them into your family if they do not know you, or please increase their intimacy with you if they do. Help them to do good in this world and thus bring more glory to Jesus, instead of disrespecting His name. Please also help me to heal and love you more and more. I ask this for my good, the good of this other person, and Your glory!

*The ultimate, most simple and essential act of forgiveness is to pray a simple prayer basically saying, **"God, do not count this particular sin against this person. Please forgive them. Now, please help me to forgive them genuinely from my core, and please help me to heal."** Anybody can do that for any violation at any time and you have obeyed Jesus! It sounds crazy and you might not accept that as truth yet, but that's it.*

... Then comes the healing process.



BOOK 1:

THE FORGIVENESS JOURNAL

1. DESIRE & CONFUSION

We say we want it ... we need it ... we want to give it ... especially as Christians because we (probably) know that we are *commanded* to DO it.

But if you're like me, true forgiveness has been hard for you ... confusing ... maybe even frustrating. You may want to forgive but not know what it even really means. You may want to forgive but the hurt is so deep you wonder if you ever can. You may *know* that you need to forgive, but not a single fiber in your body agrees. You are angry, you're hurt, and you feel justified in retaining that anger and hurt because, what was done to you was just too big of a violation.

Well I have wonderful news for you! Jesus has **COMMANDED** you to forgive!

Now that may *not* sound like good news. It may sound like a terrible idea! It may sound downright cruel. But here's why I say it is wonderful. When Jesus commands something, that means that it is absolutely possible; it means that it is a **GOOD** thing, not a harmful thing. **AND**, if He commands something, then we have the assurance - the absolute and confirmed promise that the Holy Spirit will empower us to do it, if we ask and work with Him to obey. And **THAT** is wonderful news!

You are not sent out on your own strength to accomplish this incredibly overwhelming task of forgiveness. Rather, you set out on this quest, hand in hand with Holy Spirit. You are given the power, wisdom and endurance of Holy Spirit, as long as you continue walking with Him, abiding with Him, humbly asking for all you need from Him to accomplish this task. You are **NOT ALONE!**

So after my own decade long quest to truly understand forgiveness, and after I experienced a miracle in this area of my life, I realized that I've never once heard anyone preach (or write) on forgiveness in a way that helped me actually forgive the person who hurt me the most (so far) in my life. The sermons and books abounded, but none of them covered what it was that I **REALLY** needed to understand to get the job done.

I am now convinced - absolutely convinced - that Forgiveness is not just good, it is a weapons of spiritual warfare. And in fact, it is a weapon the likes of an atom bomb.

So I am writing this short (but intense) book because now that Holy Spirit has taken me through this journey, I believe I'm being commissioned to share the process with the family of Christ - with you.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Forgiving the deepest wounds of our lives is no easy task. So before I give you the **HOW**, there is going to be a lot of **WHY**. And, that Why is going to set you up for a successful execution of the How. You see, as we peel back the layers of our misunderstandings around forgiveness, and then actually begin to define it correctly and understand what it is and what it accomplishes, then we will become eager to actually do the (sometimes) hard work of forgiving. So don't stop reading. Don't get anxious and jump ahead. Learning to truly forgive **WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE!!!** But something so intense deserves a little time and effort. So please, pray. Do not start this book and then discard it. Get through it and watch God work!! I'm **SO** excited for you!! So with that, I say, again, with Paul, "May *The God Of All Peace* soon crush Satan under your feet". Rom 16:20

MY STORY

Now a little background. My biggest areas of study are health and theology. And, this workbook came about in the context of writing a much larger book on how to approach our own health journey in the context of a relationship with Christ. You see, I've come to believe a few things about forgiveness and how it relates to our human health.

- First, that we cannot be truly spiritually and psychologically healthy until we learn how to forgive, and actually begin practicing forgiveness.



- Secondly, bitterness, anger, resentment and all the negative emotions associated with unforgiveness actually have negative physical repercussions in our bodies. This is scientifically verifiable - not just theory!
- Thirdly, I believe that we can not talk about Spiritual Warfare without understanding forgiveness. And unfortunately, I've yet to find a sermon or a Christian book that satisfies my frustrations on the matter, or actually helped me all the way through the forgiveness process.

I'm an extremely forgiving person ... to anyone who apologizes. It's bizarre, and may be somewhat related to my genetic ADHD), but I find it hard to hold on to a grudge if someone apologizes. And, when I forgive, I literally forget (which is why it may be more ADHD than grace, if I'm being honest). I've had people come up to me and apologize multiple times for the same offense and I'm like, "Seriously - I forgot all about it until you brought it up again. We're good!" However, there are also people who hurt me deeply and *never apologized, never admitted wrong, and quite possibly never will*. My ability to forgive *them* is a different story.

There are 3 in particular, whose offenses were defining for me, and affected me at the core. One person is so far in the past I really don't care. I roll my eyes and just make fun of what a mean and miserable person she was and probably still is. That's not forgiveness though; that's just blowing it off and being happy that she's probably still miserable.

The second person harmed me a great deal, over a long period of years, in a very manipulative manner. By the time I figured it out, a lot of damage had been done. When I confronted this person, no apology was offered. Instead, this person flipped the script, blamed me for all sorts of irrelevant things (gaslighting) and made sure that I was ostracized by our shared community.

The third person was in a position of authority, grossly misjudged me, and stood in between me and a ministry job. When I figured out how I had been misjudged and brought it to this person's attention, this person shrugged it off, blew off my request for a meeting, and to this day is the biggest "church hurt" that I carry.

And finally, there was a long period of my life that I felt God abandoned me. So much grief and stress and unanswered prayers. So many years I feel were wasted. It was a complicated time involving my ex-husband's ailments, our toxic relationship, his sins and shortcomings, my sins and shortcomings, and if I'm totally honest, I had to learn to forgive my ex, my self, and GOD.

I'll come back to my stories later, but for now, know that I've struggled hard with forgiveness. I've wanted to forgive but couldn't even *think* about person 2 or 3 without feeling like a dagger was going through my heart and a rock drop into my gut. And, these offenses were not even the grossly damaging kind that come from physical or sexual violence, or childhood atrocities. I can only imagine the pain that comes with such things. But, since I knew I *needed* to forgive, I set out on a multi year quest to learn how to do so. Hopefully what I learned will help you to do so as well.

And now, as I am finally finished writing *The Forgiveness Journal* and am taking a group of people through the material, I'll add this note, that I've just this year, been faced with an extremely difficult offense to forgive. I cannot share details on this one, but the offense resulted in a year of financial chaos and tremendous fear that I would not be able to provide for my children - which was terrifying as a single mom.

How ironic that as I began to take people through this material for the first time, the enemy hit me so hard. And there I was, having to put into practice the very thing I was teaching others that I thought I had mastered. It was not easy to forgive - but I did. At this point, I did not reconcile - that is a separate act and decision (which we will discuss in a few pages), but I DID forgive. And, I still pray for this person's salvation. To God Be The Glory! And by the end of this book, you will have the tools to do likewise!

Finally, through my journey to understand forgiveness, it has become my personal conviction that forgiveness is one of the most powerful Spiritual WEAPONS in all existence. Forgiveness is the ultimate act of sacrificial love. Forgiveness is the way in which we can most imitate Jesus, our Savior. Forgiveness DESTROYS demonic strongholds in our lives, *and* in the lives of others! I cannot stress enough how tremendous a weapon forgiveness is in spiritual warfare. But before we get to all that, there are some misconceptions about forgiveness that need to be addressed. We need to clear out the old misunderstandings in order to make a clean space that's ready to receive the new correct ones!

Before we continue, take a moment to answer a few questions. This IS, after all, a forgiveness *workbook*. It is designed to take you through a journey, and that journey will include questions for you to work through as you go. These are not chapter summaries. These are personal questions. They have no right or wrong answer ... because they are *personal* questions. Do not answer them as you think you *ought*. Rather, answer them honestly or else you're just wasting your



time. I suggest you get a notebook or journal JUST FOR THIS PROCESS. Don't mix it in with another journal. Keep an entirely separate journal/notebook for your forgiveness journey.

JOURNAL:

- ◆ When we talk about forgiving someone you haven't forgiven, and don't want to forgive ... or maybe you do want to forgive them but just can't seem to do so ... who comes to mind? There IS at least one person, or else you would not be reading this book. Quite possibly, there is actually a list of people you could think up here. I highly suggest you do so, and here's how.
 1. In your workbook or journal, write down 1 to 3 names per page, leaving a chunk of space under each name for the work you'll be doing later in this book. For the bigger or more hurtful violations, use 1 name per page. If you have a list of small infractions to forgive, you can put up to 3 names per page. But don't shortchange yourself of space. You're going to be using this journal to do work under each person.
 2. Include minor offenses, or ones long ago buried under your memory. Like, I might include the boys who called me ugly in 7th grade. Even though it doesn't hurt anymore, that DID contribute negatively to how I interact with the world, and still has ripple effects today - even though I can talk about it and laugh about it now, and it doesn't hurt anymore, forgiving them will be a power move for both myself, for them, and in the supernatural reality.
 3. Include 'the big ones' that still hurt. Again, you're not doing anything with it yet, but you will, eventually. So get them all on your list.
- ◆ Ask Holy Spirit to guide you to think about ONE of them with whom you can begin to practice the tenants of this book as you go through it. It may be a small infraction, or a massive violation. But see who comes to mind. Write that person or group.
- ◆ If it is not too traumatic to do so, under each name in your journal, write out how you were violated. Be specific as possible. If it was a 1 time offense, write what you can. If it was a long term offense, write as many details as possible.
NOTE: *if you have been raped or otherwise sexually violated, or have experienced a horrific trauma of some kind, and you have OTHER people on your list besides your sexual/traumatic offender, I suggest to start with one of those other people. And, if you have not done so already, please seek professional help when you start working on forgiving that traumatic offender.*
- ◆ After you go through the forgiveness process with an easy offender, repeat the process with multiple people and work your way to the trauma. You may also want to consider formal counseling to help you through your trauma processing. And, for severe trauma that is consuming (ie PTSD from war, rape, childhood severe abuse, medical trauma, etc) there are 'alternative' therapies that help tremendously. For information on my position on these therapies, please visit Designed4Victory.com, my website.

FINALLY, LET'S PRAY

Heavenly Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit,

Thank you for your love and abiding presence! Thank you for designing me as a human - worthy of love and respect because of my design! I am the crown of Your creation, the apple of Your eye! You are abounding in Love and I am your beloved. Thank you!

Please help me as I enter this journey of forgiveness. Please fill me with Your love, wisdom, and power so that I can depend on You and obey You! You are the great healer, and I believe You will heal the wounds inflicted upon me by other people. You are the great artist, who can take broken glass and stones and shards of metal and make it into something absolutely astonishing! I believe you can do this in my life and in this situation. Help my unbelief! Help me to forgive those who, at this moment, I cannot even *desire* to forgive. And, I pray that as You empower me to forgive, that I would experience a new level of intimacy with You, and a greater understanding of who You are, and who **I** am as your beloved. Please enter into my situation. I give you permission.

All of this for Your glory, my good, and the good of those I am forgiving, and the good of all those who will hear the testimony of Your greatness from my lips. Amen.



2.WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT

I think that one of the problems with forgiving, is that most people really have no idea what forgiveness actually is. We may desperately want to forgive someone, but find it utterly impossible to let go of the hurt of the offense(s). And, we have questions, like, “Does forgiveness mean that we must become friends with the offender?”, “Does it mean we let them off the hook?”, “Does it mean we’re not to report a crime?”

So let’s start by eliminating some misconceptions about forgiveness. A long time ago I found a graphic that said “What forgiveness is not”. I found it incredibly helpful because I absolutely thought most of these things were encompassed within forgiveness. I’ve also added some items since then.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT FORGETTING OR PRETENDING IT DIDN’T HAPPEN

It did happen and we need to retain the lesson learned without holding onto the pain.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT EXCUSING

We excuse a person who is not to blame, and forgive one who has committed a wrong.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT GIVING PERMISSION TO CONTINUE HURTFUL BEHAVIORS

nor is it condoning the behavior in the past or in the future.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT RECONCILIATION

We have to make a separate decision about whether to reconcile with the person we are forgiving or whether to maintain our distance.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT HEALING

It is the first step to healing, and healing cannot occur without forgiveness, but you can (and must) forgive *in order* to heal

FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING

You can forgive without feeling good about it, and you can forgive and still feel unpleasant feelings (anger, resentment, grief, etc). Releasing negative feelings is a separate process than forgiveness.

DOES ANYTHING IN THAT LIST RELIEVE YOU?

Often, people cannot forgive because they think forgiveness is something that it is not.

So think about someone who has harmed you, towards whom you still feel anger, or bitterness, or resentment, or hurt.

JOURNAL

In your journal, choose someone for whom you can answer the following questions.

- ◆ “Forgiveness is not forgetting or pretending it didn’t happen” How were you hurt by this person/group?
- ◆ “Forgiveness is not Excusing”. How does the distinction between excusing and forgiving (above) help you to begin re-framing your approach towards this person and this issue?
- ◆ Forgiveness doesn’t allow more hurtful behavior: Is the harmful behavior ongoing? Do you feel guilty for *their* bad actions towards you? Do you feel like forgiveness means you can’t walk away from the relationship? Write out how you feel vs what the statement above is giving you permission to do. How can this concept help you to reframe how you engage with or disengage with the person?
- ◆ Does it bring you some peace to know that a decision to FORGIVE is a separate action from RECONCILING?
- ◆ Does it help you to know that forgiveness and healing are separate but related tasks?



FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING

Finally, I want to emphasize this one: Forgiveness is NOT a FEELING. I think that most often, people don't think they can forgive because they don't FEEL like they've forgiven. We may think that we will feel some sort of relief when we have "successfully forgiven" or forgiven "from the heart". But I promise you this: you can absolutely obey Jesus and FORGIVE someone even if you don't FEEL good about it. It's like a monetary debt. You can legally forgive a debt, even if you are mad that you are doing so. Now, as true as that may be, the GOAL is to also have healing which will result in a 'feeling' of some sort, be it relief, peace, desire for restored relationship, compassion, etc. But the ACT of forgiving is an ACT that can be done whether or not you FEEL like it. But we'll get to all that soon.

3.WHAT FORGIVENESS IS ... SORTA

I wish I could give you a definition of forgiveness such that you would then just be able to have an Ah-Ha moment where the concept 'clicks', and you're able to start forgiving and be done with the matter. But if that were possible, you would have looked up that definition already, applied it, and be done with any unforgiveness in you. So although I am going to satisfy your itch by talking a little about what forgiveness actually is, the majority of this book will take you through a very personalized *process* to get to a place where you are actually able to forgive as Christ would have us to.

Though I cannot stand when people use the dictionary to make a case, I think it's important to take a quick gander at the definitions of forgiveness that we find 'out there'. So, I did a google search on "what is forgiveness". And, believe it or not, there is SO much written on forgiveness! It is hard to find a religion that does not talk about forgiveness, and there is even scientific research on forgiveness. But what I discovered that was truly interesting, is that each religion approaches forgiveness slightly differently, and the scientific conclusions are also different than the religions. There is definitely some overlap between all of them, but in the end, though fascinating to study, nothing I read helped me to actually forgive! However, if I did not have Christ's way of forgiveness (that we will be focused on in this book) then to be honest, the protocol developed by the scientific method of studying the matter at the International Forgiveness Institute, would provide the most help.

The Science of forgiveness, primarily comes from about 20 years of research from the International Forgiveness Institute. They've put thousands of people through their studies and have developed a 20 step process that has been empirically shown to work, that is summarized in 4 phases.

- **Uncovering Phase:** Individuals recognize their emotional pain from an unjust injury, often feeling anger or hatred. Confronting these emotions can be distressing, but acknowledging them is a crucial step toward healing.
- **Decision Phase:** The person realizes that dwelling on the injury causes more suffering and begins to consider forgiveness as a healing strategy. While full forgiveness isn't achieved yet, they commit to exploring it and let go of thoughts of revenge.
- **Work Phase:** Active work on forgiveness begins, involving a shift in perspective about the injurer, seeking to understand their background and circumstances. This phase focuses on empathy and compassion, accepting the pain without condoning the offense, and may include acts of goodwill toward the injurer, though reconciliation isn't mandatory.
- **The individual experiences emotional relief and finds meaning in their suffering,** leading to greater compassion for themselves and others. This newfound purpose often fosters a desire to contribute positively to their community, illustrating the healing nature of forgiveness.

This is a scientific prescription for how to forgive *and experience the positive effects of forgiveness (which are actually 2 separate things, biblically)*. And if you have ever successfully forgiven someone that wasn't all that easy to do, you may recognize that your process actually looked somewhat similar to this, even though it wasn't a plan that you intentionally followed. And, though this model will help people to forgive, our forgiveness through Christ is far more simple AND far more powerful!!

So let's clarify a little further, what forgiveness is not, and what it is. Because, as we peel back the misconceptions, we will discover a simple (ie. It may be difficult but it is not complicated) path. In the previous graphic about what forgiveness is not, there were distinct things that are separate from forgiveness that we sometimes bundle with forgiveness. When we



un-bundle them, we can focus on forgiveness itself. But not only are there things we've misunderstood as aspects of forgiveness that are not, there are actually also a few things very similar to forgiveness, but that are slightly different. So, understanding that can help us to decide which is right for each of our circumstances.

According to [Merriam -Webster](#), there are 3 synonyms for forgiveness that are similar but distinctly different. They are to Excuse, to Condone, and to Pardon. (What follows in italics are the definitions provided by Merriam-Webster. Non-italics are my comments).

EXCUSE *may refer to specific acts especially in social or conventional situations . Ex: "Please excuse an interruption". Often the term implies extenuating circumstances. Ex: "injustice excuses strong responses".* Here, what you're "excusing" is something that was done accidentally or by an innocent, or for a very good reason that can be 'excused'.

CONDONE *implies that one overlooks behavior (such as dishonesty or violence) that involves a serious breach of a moral, ethical, or legal code. Ex: "he is too quick to condone his friend's faults". Ex: "she told him all—told him the truth word by word, without attempting to shield herself or condone her error".* Note: To Condone is actually a negative relative of forgiveness. It is to entirely overlook or ignore harmful or sinful behavior. We definitely are not supporting this, and God NEVER does this!

PARDON *implies that one remits a penalty due for an admitted or established offense. In other words, someone is found guilty (legally or among peers) and then given the mercy of no punishment, or an end to an existing, ongoing punishment. Ex: "after 6 months in jail, the governor pardoned him, and he was released".* This is the closest relative to Forgiveness, and actually could be considered a form of forgiveness.

However, ,

FORGIVE *implies that one gives up all claim to compensation, resentment, or vengeance (punishment).*

JOURNAL

- ◆ DOES THE PERSON YOU NEED TO FORGIVE FALL UNDER THE EXCUSE, CONDONE, OR PARDON CATEGORIES? If you'd like, Go to your existing list and simply mark which each person on there needs - forgiveness, pardon, Excusing ... Condoning is not an option. We do not approve of, nor ignore sin. But you may realize that you have different approaches for each person, depending on the offense. They may all be in need of straight up forgiveness, but at least you can apply this concept and see what you discover.

4.FORGIVENESS IS...

Forgiveness is actually a legal term. Think about the phrase "to forgive a debt". What happens if you are forgiven a debt? Did the debt happen? Yes. Do you owe money to the person who lent it to you? Yes. But if the lender forgives the debt, then you are legally released from paying it back. Let's take this concept and apply it to non-monetary offenses.

FORGIVENESS IS A LEGAL TRANSACTION

You have probably heard that holding a grudge, remaining bitter, and being angry doesn't harm the person who violated you, rather, it brings continued harm to yourself. Yet, we don't know how to let go of the demand in our heart and mind that says, "You OWE me! If nothing else, you owe me an apology! You owe me the decency of admitting you did something wrong and asking me to forgive you. You owe me at least that much." But alas, that person never asks. They never even acknowledge (confess) that they did anything wrong. They never acknowledge your pain. Or perhaps they did, and you still feel hurt and resentment. You said that you forgave them, but on the inside, you still *feel* resentment or pain or confusion.

The reason we feel this need for pay-back, or justice (a balancing of the scales), is because Forgiveness is actually a legal transaction. Essentially, To forgive is to eliminate a debt. Think of it in terms of money. If someone borrows \$1,000 but then refuses to pay it back, you can either take them to court and put them in jail (punishment) or have it ruled that

they must pay you back (recompense), or, you can *forgive* the debt - write it off. ***Forgiveness is a legal release of their obligation to pay you back.***

How do we apply this principle to non-monetary offenses? Well, when someone harms you, they steal something from you. They may steal something physical like possessions or virginity or health, ... or they may steal something less tangible like reputation, friends, opportunity, time, or feelings of safety. Whether the person physically harmed you, questioned your integrity, or merely cut you off in traffic ... whether the situation is small or grotesquely life altering, they robbed you of something and you've become angry, resentful, or bitter. Or... you have very real pain and you don't know how to heal.

Wherever the offense lands on the spectrum of harm, *ultimately, the offender has stolen something from you, and therefore you feel that the person owes you something.* You may feel that the person owes jail time, or deserves to experience equal humiliation to what they did to you, or they deserve to be exposed to the world (instead of getting away with it), or at least they owe you the decency of acknowledging how they've harmed you and they owe you an apology.

Now here is something to note: in God's economy, they actually DO owe you! Any violation from one human to another, is one that requires justice. God is a God of justice. He does not overlook offenses. Many "Laws" in the Hebrew Scriptures / Christian Old Testament deal with justice ... balancing the scales ... "an eye for an eye". These laws are both for prevention of sin, and for the good of *victims* of sin. So yes, if you have been violated, God demands justice. Why? Because He loves you. We can actually take comfort in that.

There are ways in which justice is accomplished both in this world and in the spiritual realms. In Romans 12:19, Paul quotes Deut 32:35 saying "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord." You see, our judgement, revenge, or justice will always be flawed. But God's is perfect. We can release our SELVES from the need to take revenge because God has promised to AVENGE His Children!! GOD will bring perfect justice on your behalf.

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◆ Now, in your situation, what is it that you feel this person needs to do or endure in order to pay you back for what they've done. Another way of asking the question is, "what do you want from this person to make you feel better?" Whether it's jail time, or for someone to run their car off a cliff, or just a simple apology - what is it? Write it down. Be severely honest. This is not something others will read and judge. This is the place for you to be honest with yourself and with God SO THAT healing can begin. If you don't admit you have a bullet wound, you cannot deal with it and heal from it. So take a moment to ponder about what you think this person would need to do or endure to 'pay you back' for the harm they caused.

Some people have had a lot of fun with this. It can be quite cathartic, So I want to give you a few examples. Let me clear - I want you to be so brutally honest that maybe you even shock yourself. (Note: NONE of these examples were from the women in my life group. I named them in my "thank you" section and so want to be clear that these are not THEIR stories).

- I heard one woman say that she wanted her ex to show up on her front porch every single morning, leaving a cappuccino and a muffin from her favorite coffee shop, without ever having to see him or speak with him.
- I heard a man explain how his ex emptied their bank account, took absolutely everything out of their home, and then before even asking for a divorce, she slapped him with a court order for child support even though she made twice as much money as he did. So he simply wanted her to return half the money from the bank account and eliminate Child Support unless his income someday was equal to or larger than hers.
- Another woman said she fantasized that a man would rape the man who raped her, so that he would feel used and thrown away and feel the physical pain and shame that he had inflicted upon her.
- And actually, I've heard some fantasizing that is far more gruesome than any of that (which I will not repeat) - and to be honest, I get it! Someone may have violated you in your childhood that has literally changed how your brain developed, and caused you incredible agony. And they DESERVE all the horrible things you wish upon them. (But as a Christ follower, you're still commanded to forgive them - so this is really important to get through this process).



So be brutally honest!! Whether you just wish your offender would apologize, or if you occasionally let yourself fantasize about their tortuous demise, get it out here. You may find that you need to repent and ask God for forgiveness for the anger in your own heart, but be brutally honest anyways. It's an essential part of the healing and forgiveness process.

- ◆ So take a moment : what DO you think this person would need to do or endure to 'pay you back' for the harm they caused... (If you can, revisit your list of people you need to forgive, and write something next to each one.
- ◆ Ok now let me reiterate something again ... so that you can really ponder it ... and I suggest you journal about it ... If God Himself promises to avenge His Children - to *honor* you by judging and prosecuting your offender, how does this resonate with you? Do you doubt it to be true? Does it empower you? Do you feel relief? Do you feel frustrated because YOU want to take vengeance yourself? Do you feel loved, so very loved, that someone (God) would take up your cause? Do you feel free? **Take a moment to ponder this promise of God!**

FORGIVENESS IS RELEASE

Whatever it is that you believe your offender needs to endure as "payback" for what they did to you, this is what you need to release.

I'm NOT referring to things which need to be reported to the police. If you've been raped or beaten or robbed, for example, legal action should be taken (in my opinion) especially rape or any kind of domestic abuse!!! But forgiveness from your heart can still be offered. The decision to forgive *personally*, is a different decision than whether or not to press charges in our legal system. That's where forgiveness is probably the most complicated. But in every case, each of us needs to deal with our own bitterness, resentment and anger towards the person, no matter whether the offense is minor or severe.

FORGIVENESS IS HEALTHY

Forgiveness is good for you. It is a healthy choice. Forgiving is actually better for your physical health than bitterness or anger. And, in your own strength you may have the ability to forgive someone to a certain extent. People do it all the time. And, many religions, philosophies, and psychologies teach forgiveness. However, as Christians we need to recognize that there is more to forgiveness than just coming to a place of internal peace over a matter, and 'letting go of an offense'. To give TRUE forgiveness that actually has legal standing in the spiritual realms, we need the power of Jesus.

But we'll talk about *that* soon, in the HOW of forgiveness.

But, I think that it is relevant to mention the Health of forgiveness again here, in the WHAT of forgiveness, because it is such a positive result in our own lives. If we harbor bitterness or resentment, if we hold on to anger, this does not serve you! It does NOTHING to right the wrongs of the past. It does NOTHING to address or accomplish justice. And all the while, it just increases the harm done TO YOU ... but this time at your own hand. What that person did to you was their sin. What YOU are doing to you is your own injustice. The ulcer you give yourself, the sleeplessness, the spikes in cortisol (stress hormones) that damage your body, all these things and so much more, are results of unforgiveness. So that person harmed you in one way, then your unforgiveness continues to harm you in more ways.

Now, working through genuine hurts that come from true violations is not easy work. I'm not saying you can just "name it and claim it". But the path you are on IS a path of healing. So, if you have already identified one or more of the people you need to forgive - out of obedience to God and/or for your own good, you may not yet WANT to forgive. So, let's take a moment to pray into that. Note that the blanks in the prayer are spots for you to fill in the details of your own situation and feelings.

Heavenly Father, thank you for forgiving MY rebellious heart on the basis of what Jesus accomplished on my behalf. Thank you Jesus for the sacrifice you made, not only to conquer Satan and all demonic powers and make a way of salvation, but also to make a way for relationship between humans and Heavenly Father ... between ME and Heavenly Father! Thank You Holy Spirit that you will "never leave me nor forsake me, you are with me wherever I go" to guide and comfort and empower.

God, I have no desire to forgive _____ for _____. I am so terribly hurt. I feel like _____. I wish that _____. Please forgive me for any misguided wishes for harm towards this person. And please HELP me to WANT to forgive.

Because at this moment I don't even want to, but I know I need to.

Please take this prayer as a mustard seed of faith, and do what only you can do from there. Thank you! You've promised to give me what I ask for in Jesus name. I believe that what I am asking for now is in alignment with your good and wonderful will for my life. I believe that You CAN turn 'what the enemy intended for evil' in to good ... my good and the good of those who will hear my testimony of Your great power and love.

I pray all this, hand in hand with Jesus, Amen.

FORGIVENESS IS A GIFT OF SACRIFICE

Forgiveness is not free. Though it is free to the person being forgiven, it comes at a great cost to the person *doing* the forgiving. Forgiveness wipes out a debt for one person, which means the other person absorbs the loss. This is why it can be so hard. It's like adding insult to injury. Not only did this person harm you, but now YOU have to forgive - YOU have 'be the better person' and it *feels* like you're letting them off the hook! That can be offensive, infuriating, and even more hurtful if we think that this is what God requires of us! But God does not just require it of us. He first GIVES it to us. Your salvation and God's forgiveness are free to you, but they came by way of an excruciating sacrifice of Jesus. But trust me, it is so much more than 'letting someone off the hook'. But it IS a gift that requires a sacrifice on the part of the forgiver.

FORGIVENESS IS AN ACT OF LOVE

When Jesus hung on the cross, He declared, "Father, forgive them." He set the ultimate example for us in His final breaths. Innocent, He was beaten, tortured, and killed. Christ Himself forgives his murderers, and He asks The Heavenly Father to forgive his murderers as well. This is a gruesome thing to say, but imagine your own child, while being tortured to death, asking you in his or her dying breath, "Mom - Dad - forgive them." Not only does Jesus forgive, His Heavenly Father who was also in tremendous pain, watching His Son be tortured and killed, also chooses to forgive. God had every right to hold that sin against all those people. But Jesus and the Father both forgave the most gruesome offense possible! Christ forgave His own murderers, and Heavenly Father forgave the murderers of His Son. As a parent, I won't claim that I could do that. But that's what our Heavenly Father did and still does. For those of us who claim Christ as our Savior, Heavenly Father forgives us, in spite of the pain each one of us causes Him from the sins we commit throughout our lives.

TWO KINDS OF FORGIVENESS FROM THE CROSS

1. FORGIVENESS IN THE CONTEXT OF SALVATION

It is interesting to note that Jesus offered 2 KINDS of forgiveness whilst on the cross: He forgave the criminal next to him when the criminal asked for it. He also asked Heavenly Father to forgive a whole lot of people (his murderers) who did NOT ask for it, when He said, "Forgive them, for they know not what they're doing". What's the difference? The one kind led to eternal life. This kind of forgiveness comes to those who repent (ASK for forgiveness) and give their allegiance to Jesus. That's what the criminal on the cross next to Jesus did. He asked Jesus to remember him - ie take pity on him. And the only way he could do THAT is if he really believed Jesus to be God.

The criminal said, "*We indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.*" Then he said, "*Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.*" Here we see forgiveness in the context of salvation. I'll talk more about this later, but I want to plant a seed for now: Salvation is not just forgiveness. Salvation is trusting that the work of Christ set slaves free from demonic powers that rule this planet. Salvation *includes* forgiveness from God, but does not stop there. It is citizenship and adoption. Salvation is holistic and all encompassing. I believe that someone can be forgiven of particular sins, but not saved from the authority or rule of Sin and Death. Unfortunately, modern theology rarely recognizes this. I'll discuss all of this at length in "The Theology of Forgiveness". But sufficed to say, Salvation requires that you repent and pledge allegiance to Jesus as God-King, not just 'get God to forgive you'. Now I think most of us do this without realizing that this is what we're doing. But there *are* good reasons for us to *realize* that this is what we're doing.



2. FORGIVENESS OUTSIDE OF THE CONTEXT OF SALVATION

The other kind of forgiveness is legal in the strictest terms. It is not asked for, OR it is asked for but not in the salvation context. We see Jesus give this kind of forgiveness to his prosecutors and murderers when He says, "Father Forgive them for they know not what they're doing". Forgiveness of this sort is what we offer all the time. We cannot make someone repent before God, and place their allegiance with Christ. However, we can still forgive them of particular sins they've committed against us. This kind of forgiveness actually provides an avenue *toward* repentance and salvation by removing a road block on someone's path in the Spiritual realms, and by eliminating an offense from someone's record book that Satan could otherwise use against them. But, this actually leads us to the spiritual warfare of it all. I won't say much about that until Part 3, *Forgiveness in Spiritual Warfare*. But I do want to mention it now, because for some of us, it will serve as a really big motivation to forgive!

FORGIVENESS IS A WEAPON OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The forgiveness that Jesus gave on the cross to his murderers was that of particular sins. When Jesus said to Heavenly Father, "forgive them for they know not what they do" Jesus was laying down His right to prosecute them for this particular sin committed against Him. Each of those who called for his death and each of those who executed his death, may have lists upon lists of other sins, AND if they do not eventually become Christ followers, they will remain slaves "to Sin and Death". But, the particular sin that Jesus asked Heavenly Father to forgive, will not be held against them. And, in fact, we later learn that Saint Paul himself was among those for whom Jesus prayed, because Paul was among those who both approved of and even attended his crucifixion (at least for a portion of time). That's actually pretty amazing to think about. Paul was forgiven his crime by Jesus, then latter appointed by Jesus as an Apostle.

But moving on ... Why does forgiving someone without them asking for it matter? The name Satan means Accuser. The Bible does not tell us what happened before the creation of the world, nor does it tell us much about how the heavenly order is set up. More importantly, it does not tell us WHY Satan and legions of angels rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven (though there is enough information to make some decent hypothesis'). But we DO know that they rebelled. And, we know that because of Adam's sin, the entire planet is now enslaved to the fallen angels, or as we call them, demons. And, Satan has the right, like a lawyer, to go before God to accuse us of our sins ON RECORD.

HOWEVER, whenever any Christ Follower forgives a sin committed against us, it gets expunged, and Satan can no longer bring charges to God regarding that particular sin. So when we forgive an offense (a sin), we close windows of access that the enemy has against both you and also against the person you're forgiving.

- First and foremost, in God's court, Satan cannot accuse *YOU* for *unforgiveness*. Yes, since we are commanded to forgive, then conscientious unforgiveness is its own sin.
- Second, In God's court, Satan cannot accuse your offender for the sin that you forgave.
- Third, forgiveness eliminates the enemy's right to engage with you or your offender over that particular sin. If ever you feel the whispers of guilt and shame, or resentment and anger, or hurt, pride ... anything unhealthy or anything that would separate you from enjoying your relationship with God and others over this issue... you have the authority to say, "Not today, Satan! Get behind me because that is not something you're allowed to discuss with me any more."
- Finally, the forgiveness that you give *opens* a door for the kind of repentance that results in "salvation". This is not only pleasing to God and infuriating to satan, it is very real power. I am not sure how this exactly works in the Spiritual realms. However, I know for a fact that it does. When you forgive, you not only close a window the enemy (in your life and your offender's life), you also OPEN a window to the Holy Spirit (in both your life and your offender's life). And I have seen miracle after unexpected miracle happen as a direct result of forgiveness. So keep on reading!!

Now, your power for experiencing a miracle is not like math or a science experiment. I cannot give you a step by step protocol on what to do to make forgiveness result in a miracle. If we did something step by step in order to MAKE God do our bidding - that is demonic, it is what pagans do, or witchcraft does. It is not God's way, and God won't have it.

So that being said, forgiving DOES do SOMETHING that honors God and quite often, leads to outcomes that lead us to rejoice in how wonderful God has "worked all things together for the good" after we've forgiven our offender. THAT is not magic. THAT is just one of the blessings of living in a relationship of trust with our beautiful Creator, our loving Father through Jesus Christ our King, and Holy Spirit our Counselor and strength. So know this: when you forgive, you DO something in the spiritual realms that is very real. I sincerely believe (especially because I have experienced it and

witnessed it so many times) that forgiveness leads to changes that you could not otherwise experience. Sometimes these changes are absolutely a miracle you could not have even thought up.

FORGIVENESS SATISFIES JUSTICE

God is Love and God is Just. Sparing you the chapters that could be written on this, let's just say that Love and Justice are 2 sides of the same coin. In the ancient concept of the word (which is still a reality of the word today, even if we don't pick up on it) justice is about restoring order, or balance. In other words, Justice is to bring things into alignment - to bring things into the state in which they were designed to exist.

So often, we think of justice as penal (punishment for what the law says is wrong). Though punishment is often how our world approaches justice, I think that the Bible actually presents justice differently (even if the common perspective has been penal for a couple hundred years, now). The way the Israelite scriptures (The Christian Old Testament) approaches justice is that justice is right-ness. Justice is the requirement for things to be as they were *designed by God* to be. Justice is for a dog is to run and an eagle to fly. If a dog attempts to fly, he is doing something he was not designed to do, and will suffer the consequences - which is a terribly sad result for the dog AND the dog-owner who LOVES the dog!

Essentially, that is sin. Sin is someone doing something that he or she is not designed to do as a human, "made in God's image." If you don't know what that means, you can research it, but in short, being "made in God's image" means that that Humans are unique. Even if you believe that God created by the process of evolution, Humans are still designed intentionally, not accidentally, by God in such a way that we can have a relationship with God that animals and trees cannot, AND so that we can be his stewards over all of His other creation. We have terribly screwed that up. But that's the topic for a different book.

All of the "laws" God has for humanity are not arbitrary, they're for our own good. They are instructions on how to live as we were designed. And the consequences are not punishments, they are consequences; just as a dog falling to his death while trying to fly out of a tree is a consequence, not a punishment. As we attempt to live life our own way outside of God's beautiful design for us, we suffer the consequences. As other people live outside of their design, we may also suffer consequences of THEIR sin. It is not about God being a jerk. And, it is not about God punishing us. It is about the 'natural laws' of our design. It's like the laws of nature, like gravity. Try all you may to change it, you are beholden to the law of gravity. We're much better off learning to live with gravity than to fight it. Even if we find ways to fly (hang gliding, air planes, whatever) we still interact intelligently with the law of gravity. There is a dynamic way in which we can interact with it! But all in all, it still exists, and it still sets the rules, and our successful flight is still abiding by the rules - just in an advanced manner.

Now, God is LOVE. He created the universe in LOVE. So to display His love to humans, he sacrificed His own Son (who gave Himself up willingly) to overcome the dark lord of this planet and set slaves free so that we can choose to live in alignment with God, instead of living as slaves to Sin. God Himself did what was needed to set us free. Jesus became a man, entered Hades, and defeated demonic powers of Sin & Death, and proved it by rising back to earthly life, and then proceeding into the Spiritual dimensions to rule for eternity! This is our Salvation! Then, when we are free from Sin (and Death, its consequence) God offers us forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing, and showers us with His love.

TAKE A MOMENT TO PONDER THAT.

If you're reading this book you're probably already a Christ follower to one extent or another. But many readers will come from a background of Christianity that says "YOU'RE BAD!!!! You're a worm and deserve nothing from God! REPENT! Be ashamed of your past and become a goodie goodie." Well, first, that's not the salvation presented by scripture. And I won't bore you with the church history explaining how it has become so prevalent in various forms of protestant theology today. But, 'repent to earn God's forgiveness' nor mere moralism is not what the Bible presents as a goal. And I loathe (yes I loathe) the common forms of Christianity that shame people into obedience ... especially because morals are different from one culture to the next. I promise you, no matter how moral you think you are, your definition of moral is not the same as the definition of moral to a Christian in the first century, or an Israelite living in Egypt, or even someone today who is in a country very different from yours.

So obedience to a particular church's prescribed morality is not necessarily the universal truth they may think it is. Jesus had much to say about this to the Pharisees in His day! Read the gospels with this in mind and you'll see it repeatedly.



But back to the point: ponder the love of God that would send His Son to rescue sinners. Jesus was on a rescue mission! He entered enemy territory to fight the powers, and free all of the slaves who would follow Him home. Satan has NO RIGHT to stand before God and say the 2 things he used to say about you.

1. "That person belongs to my kingdom" - Because you have renounced 'this world' and have chosen to be a part of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.
2. "That person has a list of unforgiven sins for which I can still prosecute them in Your court!" - Because we are shielded and *purified* by the BLOOD of Jesus Himself. In the book of Job, we see how Satan works. He is called the accuser both in the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian New Testament. But now, Satan has NO right. NO standing before God to accuse ANYONE who takes refuge in Christ!!!! **God's Forgiveness is not just God saying "Ok you can be in good standing with me now" It is also a legal act blocking SATAN from taking you back into slavery!!!!**

Oh how I wish I had better words to convey this concept. But alas, I do not. So with the power of the Holy Spirit I pray it makes sense to you and opens you up to a new level of awe in your relationship with Jesus.

THE POINT:

When we forgive others, when we release them from paying us what we think they owe us, we are performing an act of love, reflective of Christ's love for us. They will still be accountable for the other sins in their lives unless they enter into God's kingdom through allegiance to Christ. But, YOU choose to ask God to forgive them. YOU choose to not hold their offense against them in God's court. And THAT, my friend, is obedience to Jesus, and incredibly powerful in the supernatural battle!

FORGIVENESS REQUIRES MORE THAN WE CAN MUSTER

Quite often, we will not have the ability to forgive as Christ commands us to forgive. So how can God command us to do something that we are not able to do? Well, on our own strength we cannot do it. But the beauty of God giving us a command that we cannot accomplish by ourselves, is that we must depend on Jesus & His Holy Spirit to give us what we need to obey the command! So let me repeat this: Forgiveness, real Christlike forgiveness, is NOT something you can do on your own! **You MUST depend on the Holy Spirit to empower you to forgive! Forgiveness is the ultimate way in which we reflect God, and can only be accomplished in partnership with God!**

This is good news!

In fact, it's amazing news! All that frustration you feel when you know you *should* forgive, but can't seem to; or the dagger you feel in your stomach when you try to forgive but the pain of the offense still resides in you ... it's ok (sort of) because it just goes to show that you cannot do this on your own. **So do not pile guilt on yourself for not being able to forgive as you ought to. Instead, reject the guilt and take your desire to forgive, to God.** When you go to Him, bringing your desire to forgive, and He WILL help you through your process to do so. And, it will PLEASE Him to help you!

Perhaps take a moment to pray about this now.

Heavenly Father,

I come in the name of Jesus Christ and ask that you would fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may have the ability to forgive. Help me to leave the fate of the person who violated me in Your hands, and trust that justice will be accomplished. Thank you that the hurts in my life matter to You! Thank you that you have forgiven me of all that I have done to violate your creations, be it the planet, other people, or myself. Thank you that You can heal my wounded heart, and teach me how to move forward. Please help me to look to YOU for healing, and not depend on some form of perceived justice that I have made up in my own mind. Please also give me wisdom about how to proceed in my actions towards this person. Should I reach out? Should I walk away? Is there legal action I need to take? Whatever I do, help me to do it depending on Your guidance, Your strength, Your love. I need Your wisdom, Lord.

I pray this for Your glory, my good, and the good of all those who will hear the testimony of your greatness, Amen.



5.THE HOW OF FORGIVENESS

Congrats! You've made it to the part of this book you've been eager for - the HOW. Hopefully you are very motivated for this, after learning about the what and the benefits of forgiveness, so that now you are both eager AND more capable of doing the work of forgiveness.

“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU”

True and complete forgiveness is to love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. This is good news! Much of what WE think forgiveness is (as we discussed - reconciliation, healing, etc) is not forgiveness. Those things may be attached to forgiveness, and we may need forgiveness to reach them, but those things themselves are not required first. Forgiveness is its own thing first. So, I have become convinced that forgiveness is defined for us by Jesus Himself, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”. This may not yet make sense, but by the end of this section, I am certain that it will.

STEP 1. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

No matter what, we are called to see our offenders as people who need to experience *God's* forgiveness and His love. I believe that the ultimate act of human love, is to take someone's sin against us to God and say, “please forgive them” just as Christ did on the cross for those who hung Him there. Forgiveness is to ask GOD to forgive the offender.

You see, in God's justice system, all offenses are against at least 2 parties, one of which is always God Himself. Whether someone violates the planet, themselves, or another human, all of this is God's artwork, created by God in Love. So if someone were to come into your house and shred a painting that you had painted, they do harm to both the painting and to you, its creator. If someone harms your child, they harm both the child and you, the one who loves that child the most. Likewise, every violation (or 'sin') is a violation of the one who was harmed, and the Creator. So even before you, yourself “FEEL” like you've forgiven someone, you CAN perform the WORK of forgiveness by asking God to forgive the person. And, even if that person never comes to know Jesus, God will forgive them of that particular sin against you, because you asked, and YOU are in Christ.

You have the AUTHORITY to forgive! Jesus has given it to you. You can only forgive that which has been done to YOU, but you can in fact, forgive.

Forgiveness is to release our charges against a person from our own queue, and from God's. You may take someone to court, and the court may put them in jail. You may cut off a relationship. You may guard your heart. But whether rapist, murderer, bully, a parent trapped in addiction, a coworker, a rude driver, a negligent spouse ... ultimately, the act of forgiveness is the act of lifting the person up to our Heavenly Father and saying, “I release them TO you. Lord, forgive them ... no really! Based on the work of Christ on the cross, I release the debt this person owes to me.”

This may not sound like good news at first, but actually, it is VERY good news! You see, all the crap that we have entangled with forgiveness - our pain, emotions, hurts, confusions, anger ... all that can be dealt with separately ... which is quite freeing in the work of forgiveness. Forgiveness is relevant to our own healing, but forgiveness is *not dependent* on our healing. In other words, we can forgive first, THEN we are freed up to work with God on our healing. It is empowering. It may not feel empowering yet, but it is.

And though we'll dive into this in a few pages, I'll tell you this much now:

You can obey Jesus right this minute by doing one simple act: Look at your list. Pick a person to forgive, and pray the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive _____ for _____. I release my claim in your courts against him/her. Please help me heal. Amen.

STEP 2 : PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU

Now, to truly come to a place of genuine forgiveness, we're called to take it 1 step further: We're to not only release the offender from their debt to us before God, we are also commanded to pray for their salvation and/or well being. It may sound something like this,



Heavenly Father, please forgive _____ for _____. I release my claim in your courts against him/her. Please help me heal.

And please bless _____ and draw him/her close to you. I don't deserve your mercy, nor does _____. But as your child, I'm asking for it on their behalf. Thank you for your Love. Amen.

This may not look all that profound, but whether you pray for the driver who just cut you off in traffic or the person who caused you to suffer PTSD from a severe trauma, this simple act IS in fact, deeply profound. And, for those bigger offenses, you'll realize how profound and powerful it is, because this simple, simple prayer is going to feel like the hardest thing you've ever had to do in your entire life. Trust me! I know it first hand!

But before we go any further, I want to give you a win!

So try It! Try praying this simple prayer for someone on your list.

JOURNAL

- ◆ Go to your list. Pray that prayer for someone (you can use my words or your own, but if its difficult, use my words). Then take a moment to journal about it under that person's name. Did you feel relief? Resentment? Joy? Communion with Christ? Take a moment. You're fighting a spiritual battle - and WINNING. Even if it hurts, YOU ARE WINNING!

And if you're ready to take it 1 step further, here is an expanded prayer:

Heavenly Father, please forgive _____ for _____. I release my claim in your courts against him/her. Please help me heal.

And please bless _____ and draw him/her close to you. I don't deserve your mercy, nor does _____. But as your child, I'm asking for it on their behalf. Thank you for your Love.

Please send your Holy Spirit into their lives so that they can seek forgiveness from YOU - for all the sins they've committed whether they remember the sin they committed against me or not. Lord, do not count this one against them. Forgive them."

Praying this may be insanely difficult, but it is our ultimate calling.

GOD'S JUSTICE ON BEHALF OF THE VICTIM

I'm going to tell you a little about the offense that I struggled with most. It was this offense that set me on my journey of truly understanding forgiveness and HOW to forgive. I knew I needed to forgive, but didn't know how, when the pain was so deep - when no apology was offered - when the problem was an ongoing issue. And, though I wanted to forgive this person, every time I encountered them it was like opening the wound all over again. Then, one day, as I was praying about it, God gave me the merciful insight I needed. Perhaps this will help you too. I felt as if Jesus was saying, "Carol, it's safe for you to let go of these violations. *You may drop them into My hands.*"

I pictured myself with Jesus, trying to hand over the hurt, but alas, I could not.

FORGIVING A PERSON WHO IS NOT A CHRIST FOLLOWER

So, He continued, 'IF this person is NOT my child, then this person will be judged for the actions against you and all of his/her other sins as well. I am The Perfect Judge and I promise to judge this person on your behalf. *Justice WILL be executed. You WILL be vindicated. I will do this because you are my daughter, and I LOVE YOU.* However, I'm asking you to forgive them - for your own good, and yes, for theirs" (sidetone: at the time, I did not understand what that meant, but what really resonated to me in that situation was vindication. I'd been so misjudged, vindication was everything. It may be something different for you, but if you engage with Holy Spirit about it, I'm sure He'll show you what YOU need to understand too).

I actually shuddered to think of this person facing GOD and God's judgement, and I felt led to pray for this person's salvation, because though they claimed to be a Christian, I was not sure if they were or not.



FORGIVING A CHRIST FOLLOWER

Then, I sensed God saying, "IF, however, this person has placed his/her faith in Me, then this person's sins have already been forgiven *in full*, by ME on the cross. If you have a grudge you're holding on to, then you hold it against ME. Look at my pierced hands and feet. *It is finished*. If you have a problem with this person, then you need to take it up with Me!"

In this moment, what I saw in my mind's eye was this person being protected by Jesus, just as I am protected by Jesus. Jesus stood between me and this person, and if I had a grievance against this person, I needed to take it up with Jesus, like this person's body guard. And, I realized that the same blood that protects and purifies me, also protects and purifies this person. So I replied, "Nope. We're good. I've got no beef with You, Jesus!"

And, it was suddenly done. I was suddenly able to 'let it go'.

FREEDOM BY TRUSTING GOD'S JUSTICE

He continued, "*You are now FREE to love this person by My power*. You don't have to accept this person's abuse. You may separate yourself from this person's presence. But, you are empowered by my Holy Spirit in your life to take actions of love, mercy and grace towards this person *regardless of the response offered back to you*. You can love this person with my love. *Leave the judgement ...or ... the bearing of sin up to Me.*"

This brought incredible freedom. I felt bad for this person that they'd have to face GOD's judgement if they were not His child, and I prayed for this person's salvation. And, I knew that if this person was actually a Christ follower, as they claimed to be, then the harm this person had done to me was placed onto Christ. Thus, any anger, resentment, and bitterness I had, needed to be nailed onto the cross as well.

Do you see what happened? God showed me that *He's* handling it. He *is* just. Justice is ALWAYS accomplished. Victims are always vindicated. YOU are not overlooked or forgotten. You are a beloved Child of God. And even though you've expunged this person's sin against you from God's 'record book', the DAMAGE done by that sin TO YOU is NOT forgotten by your Heavenly Father. Yes, that person will not have to pay for that sin, but that does NOT mean that YOU have to live in pain over it. Your Heavenly Father SEES you and LOVES you and He is the GREAT HEALER. And that is what I pray we accomplish together in this process.

THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICIAL WORK

Now if your offender is or becomes a Christ follower, then the person's sins (including the ones committed against you) are covered by Christ's blood. ***No amount of torture to the person who harmed you, can accomplish MORE than Christ's blood sacrifice has accomplished!!*** Do you feel angry about that? Do you say, "No! That's not fair! That person shouldn't be let off the hook just by asking for Jesus to forgive them! They need to pay for what they've done to me!" Well, be careful and consider your self-centered emotions!

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE IS ENOUGH

Let me see if I can explain it this way. My best friend had the following vision. She imagined herself before God, alongside of Jesus. Now, this woman has a terrible history of abuse that led to a drug addiction. We laugh at the 'crazy' things she's been through now that she has been clean and healed for so many years. But her list of offenses was not short or average. So she pictured herself standing in front of God the Father as judge, and Jesus was next to her. And, with her book of sins in Jesus' hands, Jesus said to the Father, "Is there anything in here that my blood is not enough to cover?" Now, at this point she pictured something that is truly ridiculous and slightly dark comedy. She pictured God the Father saying, "Nope - your blood is not enough for THAT sin there, nor that other sin there, or hmmm ya - that one on page 462 - that one isn't covered by your blood either. Jesus, Your sacrifice just wasn't enough"

I feel ghastly just repeating such a terrible picture - but that's the point! It is a truly ridiculous and offensive thought to think that ANYthing a human can do is TOO Big and TOO bad to be covered by the blood sacrifice of Jesus!

So, don't be a hypocrite! Did *you* not place *your* sins on the cross? How many grievances against other people have you been forgiven? How many sins that you don't even realize or remember that you committed? Thousands upon thousands! Let go of your demand that payment is made by this person TO YOU, and trust your Savior.

BE ENCOURAGED!

The offenses committed against you, God's child, are not overlooked or forgotten. He loves you. Every offense against you will be accounted for, one way or another. In faith, you need to believe Him on this point. And THAT is how you forgive. You are freed to offer forgiveness and let God handle it. You are freed from the burden of unforgiveness, and freed to begin your journey of healing in the safe context of your relationship with Jesus.

NOW do you see?

You don't have to enforce justice, because God has got Justice covered one way or another. Your hurt has not gone unnoticed by your Heavenly Father. "Vengeance is MINE says the Lord God Almighty"!

And, as far as that hurt goes, you need to take that to your Heavenly Father who loves you, and ask Him to help you heal. After you forgive THEN you can begin to heal. The healing does not come before the forgiveness. God offers you a basis on which to forgive. *Then* you can begin healing and letting go of your anger, bitterness, resentment, frustration, sadness ...

So what about things where legal action should be taken? Let me say loud and clear - if the person who violated you did something illegal, then press charges in our legal system, especially if it was a sexual violation. Did someone steal from you? Is a tenant refusing to vacate your property? Did someone hit your car? Is an ex refusing to pay child support? There are thousands of examples. It is not un-christian to press charges in our legal system, if they are legitimate. Personal forgiveness is a separate (though related) matter.

TRY THIS VISUALIZATION:

Picture the person you need to forgive

Picture their offense(s) against you as a dagger dripping with *your* blood

Picture yourself walking to the cross where Jesus hung.

Place the dagger beneath him at the foot of the cross

See the blood from his feet drip on to the dagger.

Hear him declare "it is finished"

You then look down and realize that you are still bleeding where the dagger stabbed you.

(If the offense was physical or if you're having physical repercussions from the offense - stomach aches, head aches, etc, OR whatever part of your body cringes in pain when you think about this offense - picture that the dagger stabbed you in that place on your body.)

Look up at where the cross was ... now there is a brilliant light.

Christ stands at the center - beautiful - made of light and dressed in white.

Ask Him, "please heal me where the dagger stabbed me"

Feel his healing hands of love.

Release your pain into HIS care. ...

and whatever happens next is between you and Jesus.



MY STORY PART DUEX

Love Your Enemies, and Pray for Those Who Persecute You.

Q. How can I know when I've truly forgiven someone, "from the heart"?

A. When I can pray for them without resentment.

We started thinking about this already, but I want to take it a little further.

When I was in my process of figuring out forgiveness, I had that culminating 'a-ha moment' when Jesus showed me that I needed to turn over my situation to him, trusting that either the person who harmed me would have to pay for their sins in the final judgement, OR if I forgave them then I released any claim before God for their judgement, OR if the person was a fellow Christ follower, then that person's sins against me were paid for by the same blood that paid for my sins. Either way, justice would be satisfied. I would be vindicated. I was loved and not overlooked.

So I thought I had forgiven this person. I no longer had anger in my heart. I still hurt from time to time when this person's actions clearly were bent against me, however, all I had to do was pray and release it into God's hands and move on. I could forgive even if the hurt took time to heal.

But then I realized I still had another step to go.

A great prayer warrior that I met, also knew this person who harmed me. When we realized we had this mutual connection, the prayer warrior told me that he prayed for this person nearly every day. When he said this (quite casually as a matter of fact), within seconds I went from surprised, to confused, to angry, to a different kind of confused. In my mind I thought "why would you pray for this person?" I had never prayed for this person outside of the context of my hurt. I never prayed for this person's health or well being or success or relationship with Christ. And, I realized that not only had I never prayed for this person's well being before, I was mad that someone else was doing so!

This instinctive response within me revealed that I had not completely forgiven this person yet! So, I realized I needed to start praying for this person. NOT praying for their harm, or that they'd realize they'd wronged me, or that they'd say sorry or send me a gift or something. No, I needed to start praying for their well being no matter how they treated me, good, bad, or indifferent.

But this task was harder than you'd think. It was almost *physically* painful for me to pray for the person who had done me wrong. So, with this prayer warrior, I started off simply by asking God for the grace and strength to pray for this person. That first time praying for this person, I was only able to muster up a begrudging sort of "please keep this person safe and help them to grow closer to you. Amen".

However, I began asking God to change MY heart towards this person so that I could pray for them. I asked that I'd have the strength to pray, the desire to pray, the wisdom to pray. I asked that God would put love in my heart ... and increase it. Eventually I was actually able to start praying for this person, sincerely and with fervor.

In PRAYING for the person who harmed me, I was eventually healed!!!

Eventually, this person's negative actions didn't even offend me anymore. I'd just roll my eyes and let it go.

And, if you've ever struggled with hurt or bitterness, then if you're honest, you'll know that a transformation like THAT is a miracle. It may not be perfect, but it is good and it is a miracle!

Now, a few pages back, we already prayed a prayer that included this concept. I wanted to get you to that point as quickly as possible. But I really want to challenge you to do more than that initial, basic prayer. Try praying the following until you can genuinely pray for the person who harmed you.

Jesus, forgiver of my sins, thank You for loving me even though I'm struggling to forgive. Please send Your Holy Spirit to help me love _____ enough to pray for them. Help me to lay down my hurt and broken heart at your feet. Jesus You are the only one who can heal my hurt. Even the person who harmed me cannot do that. So I turn to You, for healing and for strength. Give me the strength to pray for _____. Give me Your insight so that I will pray effectively for _____'s good. Help me not to be snarky. Help me to pray for _____'s well being, and that _____ will love You and engage in their own healing with You. Right now, I know that _____ needs _____. Please help them in this situation. Help them to turn to You and depend on You. Thank You for Your eternal love. Amen.



CONGRATULATIONS!!!

We have more to discuss, but you have obeyed Jesus! You have given legal forgiveness, and done so 'from the heart'. How do I know? Because you asked God to forgive your enemy, and you prayed for their well being. You obeyed.

Are you healed? Probably not yet, unless you were practicing with a super minor infraction that didn't hurt that much in the first place. But either way, you obeyed Jesus and forgave someone. And THAT counts!

Think about our earthly court systems. If someone harms you and you press charges, your day in court will come. But the second that you sign a paper saying that you're dropping the charges, it's done. That's what you've done here. You've dropped the charges AND followed Christ's example (and His command) by praying for your offender.

If you wanted, you could stop here. Just wash, rinse, repeat, with every offender from your past and moving forward. But there's more. So enjoy the win (even if it hurt) and let's keep going.

6. A FEW ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED

FORGIVING THE DEAD

What if the person you need to forgive is dead?

There is a tremendous amount of speculation, and no solid intel on what happens to us after we die. Is it soul sleep until Christ's return? Do Christ followers enter into glory instantly? Do spirits live in some sort of limbo where they can interact with the humans living life on earth? Or perhaps they live in glory and also can interact with us or hear our requests for assistance or prayers to Christ? Whatever your denomination of Christianity teaches, is not what I want to address here. But, I *can* address this very real issue of forgiving someone after they've left this form of life that we still experience. A friend of mine asked me to do so, and I'm really glad she did.

TIME

1. God is not bound by time. Psalm 90:4 says, *A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.* And 2 Peter 3:8 says, *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*

God is the inventor of time. Time is how WE experience this life, but even science knows that time is just our experience, not an absolute. How much more does GOD Himself, the inventor/creator of all things, sit outside of that which He created. God the Father does not experience time as we do.

2. We also know from many scriptures that God hears all the prayers of His children. Therefore, some denominations teach that we can, in a sense, pray backwards. And, based on science and scriptures, I believe that could absolutely be true... sorta. For example: Sometimes I pray for my Grandfather, who, as far as I know, walked away from Christ after World War 2, and never came back. However, I pray for his salvation anyways, because my prayers now, could (along with my prayers before his death) all be counted by our God, who is everywhere present in all places, at all times. Who knows whether or not my prayers now, can contribute to a possible end-of-life conversion of my grandfather 25 years ago. I am not stating this as a theological truth. However I do believe it is a possibility.

And THIS I know for certain: Anything from the enemy is designed to draw you away from obedience or intimacy with God; things like shame, other religions, sins of all kinds, passions and lusts indulged ... But Holy Spirit gives us ideas and instructions that draw us near to God. So if praying backwards isn't actually 'a thing' but it draws me near to God, and my prayers are for things in alignment with the principles revealed to us in scripture, then I believe that whether or not my prayers have effect 'backwards', God is still honored by my them since my desire is in alignment with His Kingdom. But don't bend your brain over this. If it is helpful, put it in your pocket. If it is confusing or disturbing, toss it! Keep only what is helpful to you for your own journey.



FORGIVENESS IS NOT BOUND BY LINEAR TIME

This next thing I DO know: it is absolutely true that we can forgive someone who is already dead to this life. There are 2 ways that we can exercise this.

1. In the most basic sense, you can pray that prayer which says, "God, I forgive this person for this thing, even though they no longer live as I live. So please, do not hold that particular sin against them. Again, because time is non-linear to God, He can absolutely honor this. What does that mean in eternity? I have NO idea. But I also don't understand how molecules are sent through the air, into outer space and sent back to this planet in the form of a phone call or a TV show! But that doesn't stop me from using my phone and watching TV!
2. You can then begin to heal. You will never hear that person ask for forgiveness. They'll never say "I'm sorry". But Jesus and Holy Spirit can become your healer, your comforter, your guide in your process. At this point, all you have to do is ask God to forgive them. Healing begins after.

So here is a prayer that I hope will help you.

Holy Spirit, I am confused. I am hurt. But, I want to be obedient. So even though _____ is no longer living this life, I ask that you will help me to forgive both in the releasing of their debt against me, and also the kind of forgiveness that heals (we'll be talking about this in the next section of the book). Please God, help me.

And if you're ready, you can continue:

Heavenly Father, please forgive _____ for _____. Even if my heart hurts, my gut is heavy, and it gives me a headache to ask - please God, I'm obeying and am asking for you to forgive them, even though I still hurt. I forgive them. Amen

Note: Again, this is not magic, it's a process!

Step 1 is to "love your enemy" by writing off the debt - to forgive the debt.

Step 2 It is to "love your enemy" by praying for the one who has persecuted you.

Step 3 through 100 is healing and anything else that comes as you move forward.

This is literally the same process as all other forgiveness. The only difference is that there is no option for reconciliation, unless the deceased person was a Christ follower and you can experience a restored relationship with them in Heaven. But as for your experience in this lifetime, there will be no apologies, no reconciliation. Your duty to God and to YOUR SELF is to forgive them so that you can move on to the process of healing from whatever wounds they created.

WHEN "LEGAL" ACTION IS REQUIRED

I'll very briefly mention this. There are violations that can be forgiven without your violator even knowing you forgave them. Whether alive or dead, there are just times you need to forgive without going to the person to tell them how they harmed you. There are other times when you need to take legal action, or go to the person so that they have the opportunity to repent.

Per the laws of your country, if someone has violated you legally, it is your right to press charges. And if they committed a crime, it's not just your right, it is your responsibility. Whether theft, rape, a car accident, assault ... you can take legal action AND forgive from your heart. The 2 are separate acts, just as forgiveness and reconciliation, or forgiveness and healing are separate acts.

There is also a time for intervention within the Christian community. And sadly, very few churches even know how to do this anymore. But in Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus says, *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*

This applies to 2 scenarios. First, if someone is sinning in general, and bringing dishonor to the name of Jesus, that person needs to be gently held accountable. And, if the person has sinned against you, they also can be held accountable, especially if it is ongoing or you know it is intentional. And if you feel it may be an oversight or unintentional,

you can also follow this protocol. But in all things, always approach this process with respect and kindness. Especially because YOU TOO commit sins. So treat others as you'd hope to be treated!

Now, the protocol is simple: First, you go to the person (humbly and kindly) to share what you've observed and counsel the person to repent before God and change their ways. If they refuse, you bring someone else, then bring it before the leaders of the church. If they are still defiant, then they're to be treated as an unbeliever, and can no longer take communion (or participate in any sacred rites of a Christian). Now usually this protocol would be for someone in a sin pattern, not a 1 time offense. I would not exercise this protocol for petty offenses. Just forgive those and move on. But anything from ongoing gossip to child abuse is relevant here.

7. THE FORGIVENESS JOURNAL

So far, if you have prayed that God would forgive someone, you've been obedient to Christ. Now, if that was painful to even choke out a sentence of "God please forgive them" the questions that follow are going to be essential for you to struggle through. I cannot emphasize it enough - journal about these questions. And if you hate journaling - take these questions to a therapist to work through. And if you don't have the money or time for therapy - or you don't want to go to therapy (even though you probably should) take these questions to a very trusted friend to talk through. You may only be able to choke out an answer to one question per day ... or one question per week. But please, for your own good and the good of those in your life, work through them one way or another.

This is a template that you can use over and over. Use your notebook or journal to work through these questions with as much time and pondering as you need. Some infractions will be easy to forgive as you walk through the steps. Others will take a very long time. But one thing I know for certain: Forgiveness becomes easier and easier the more you practice it! And, TRUE forgiveness is profound and life changing, but rather simple once it is unburdened by all the stuff that we've discovered is NOT actually forgiveness.

The next page is the questions with some insights to each that may help you to better understand them and understand how to go about answering them. THEN, I give these questions to you in the form of a worksheet, without the commentary, so that you can print it out (if it helps to do so), every time you need to work through the process.

NOTE: Please offer forgiveness to YOUR SELF when offenses are the most difficult to forgive. This is very real work. Remember, you NEED God's help to accomplish it. That is, in part, why it is so healthy for you to do it with Him... even if it takes a long time. If crimes were committed against you, He is quite aware of them. He knows full well that it is not easy. ***So, don't intermingle self abuse and self judgement with this process! The process is hard enough without dragging self shaming into the mix.*** Just keep working, keep asking God to walk with you through the process. Keep working, depending, moving forward ... and watch what happens.

THE FORGIVENESS JOURNAL ... WITH EXPLANATIONS

1. **Who do you need to forgive?** Name 1 person or group that you're going to be working on, not your entire list.
2. **What did they do (or not do) ... or, What are they doing (or not doing)?** (I think this is self explanatory, but try to be detailed if possible.)
3. **What do you believe they have robbed from you?**
 - Examples: time, money, reputation, opportunity, virginity, safety, pleasure, security, something physical/tangible like a car or a vase, the love of someone, peace, sanity, a relationship, a job, etc etc.
4. **How has their offense affected you?**
 - You can use bullet points or paragraphs - whatever works for you

- This may sound obscure, so let me explain with a physical example. Consider an injury. You go to the doctor and say, “My knee hurts”. The doctor replies, “What does it feel like?” You say “I dunno it just hurts.” And the doc says, “is it sharp? Throbbing? a dull ache” and you say “I dunno it just hurts”.

Your doc continues, “well how is your knee pain affecting you?” Now, you could just continue saying “I dunno it just hurts” OR you could say something like, “well, if I sit with my right knee bent for more than a few minutes, then I can’t straighten it. It’s stiff and painful and feels swollen.” NOW your doctor has some intel that will help him ask more questions, consider tests to give, make a diagnosis, and give recommendations for how to heal. Maybe it needs surgery, maybe it just needs a good massage therapist or chiropractor or physical therapy. But you need to grapple with the details to begin moving towards healing and recovery.

Likewise, it can be very helpful to ponder how their offense has affected you.

5. Why does this hurt? / What pain did this cause? (Don’t skip this. It’s important to identify).

- This can be tricky, so free-writing might be the best bet here. And, by the way, writing actually opens a portion or process within your brain that otherwise stays locked up. So if you can begin a habit of journaling through the hardest things, you might be pleasantly surprised at what happens.
- Digging deep to find a WHY can be tricky. I’m going to use a personal example so that you can better understand how this can really work. The following is how I thought through a situation when a company went bankrupt for which I did some contract work, and my final invoice went unpaid for nearly \$5,000 (which represents almost 2 full months of my very tight budget at the time)
- Why did this hurt? It put me into a financial tailspin (I am a single mom on a single income struggling to provide for 3 teens). I went into a deep state of stressed and depressed. My mind was in chaos. My children suffered - which broke my heart and caused me more pain than anything else. One night (for example) I wanted to treat my son to some French fries - but I looked at my credit card (that I was using to pay for anything I could) and I only had \$75 left, and a bill for over \$100 was going to be hitting soon. So, I spent time crying instead of going out for French fries.
- Now, *that* was a little free-writing but it did *not* result in an answer to WHY that hurt. So I ask myself again - WHY did that hurt? After some more journaling, I realized that ultimately, the offense hurt because it put me in a position of fear. I feared losing my home. I feared not being able to feed my children. I feared defaulting on my credit card and other bills. This offense hit a core fear for all humans: fear of not being able to survive.
- It also put me in a state of stress and confusion: more painful emotions. My stress/confusion/fear response was a short tempered mom and a brain rapidly cycling back and forth between chaos and depression. It also put a strain on my ‘significant-other’ relationship because he got laid off about a month later and had a moment of intense financial stress himself. So, instead of being in a place where one of us was UP while the other was down, we were both down at the same time, and *that* is really, really difficult.
- So the offense was a large unpaid invoice.
- The immediate result was a lack of funds.
- The PAIN was fear, stress, depression, chaotic brain, short tempered mom, strain on a significant other relationship. There was more, because this company was owned by an old friend, but I won’t go into all that.
- **So another way to think about this question is to look for the PAIN. What pain resulted from the infraction?**

Now, a more simple example is this: Someone cut me off in traffic.

- Why did that hurt? Because it put my safety in jeopardy, or slowed me down when I was already late.
- So whether the infraction caused deep pain or just startled you and can be blown off, get in the habit of asking “Why did this hurt” or “What pain did this cause me”. The more quickly you can identify it (be it in a split second or over a long course of pondering) the better you’ll be.
- ALSO, once you do this, you might want to go back and add things to your answer in #3 - what did they rob from you? One of my answers to that question would be “peace in my home, psychological well being of my kids, and inner peace because of my feelings of guilt and sorrow over how I have been so short tempered with my kids because I’m maxed out over this situation.”

6. **What do you think your offender needs *to do*** (apologize? Pay you back?), **or *endure*** (go to jail, go through the same pain they caused you?) **to ‘make it right’?** In your heart, what is it that you think would make you feel better? Whether you realize it or not, that’s what you believe justice would look like.

So we've kind of talked about all of those questions previously, but I just put them in one easy spot for you to go through over and over and over again. These are your six essential questions for difficult forgiveness.

There's other essential questions for *healing*. This kind of overlaps, it's all involved, but in one sense, you can forgive someone as simply As just saying,

God, I still hurt, I'm still mad, I still have all sorts of stress and emotions concerning this violation. But in obedience, I ask you to forgive this person and don't count this thing they've done to me, against them. Don't hold it against them.

Now that I've forgiven them in the spiritual realms, and disarmed the enemy in my life and in that person's life over this particular violation, Now Jesus Holy Spirit, please help me to heal.

*That is the short form - the ultimate, most simple and essential act of forgiveness is to pray a simple prayer basically saying, “**God, do not count this particular sin against this person. Please forgive them. Now, please help me to forgive them genuinely from my core, and please help me to heal.**” Anybody can do that for any violation at any time and you have obeyed Jesus! It sounds crazy and you might not accept that as truth yet, but that’s it.*

... Then comes the healing process.

But before we get to the healing part, I'd like to give you one more example - the ULTIMATE example that shows us that all we are required to do in order to obey God in the act of forgiveness, is to say, “God, do not hold this sin against them. I release my claim. On this sin”. That's what Christ did at the cross. He said, “Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Did he feel good?

No. He was hanging on a cross.

He was bleeding out his freaking hands and feet... and head... and back!

There was a crown of thorns.

He'd been whipped with glass and leather.

He was bleeding to death as he was suffocating to death.

And in the midst of his greatest pain, he said, “Lord, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing”

And do you think His pain was just physical, and not emotional?

Oh heck no! He was alone! He had three people there to support him : his mother, John and one of the Mary's - and the rest were mocking him. The rest were executing him. He was abandoned. He was betrayed. His emotions were in the trash right now.

He did not feel good physically, emotionally, or psychologically. He was grappling with the fact that His Father was letting him hang on the cross. He said, “Father, why have You forsaken Me? Daddy”. So this man was not, even though he was God, he was not in emotional freedom. He was a man who was in physical pain, emotional pain, psychological pain.

But in that moment, he obeyed God the Father by saying, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing.” That's it! So, if you can muster just that one sentence, “God, forgive them - I am releasing them from the sins they have committed against me” then you have obeyed! The end. You can walk away right now, and you’ve obeyed!

But there's more - You can stay in your pain if you want. But, it's not good for you. It's not what I want for you. It's not what God wants for you. And frankly, it would be disobedient for you to just stay and wallow in your pain. God wants healing for you! So there are more steps to be taken, but at its core, you have obeyed, even if you feel like crap.

7. LOVE YOUR ENEMIES & PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.

- In the case of forgiving an enemy/persecutor, love is to forgive them and to pray for them. So for that purpose, ask yourself the following questions after you have asked God to forgive them :
 - **What does this person need** (you may know, or you may have an educated guess). Pray that God would bless them with that! Whether it is salvation, or has to do with finances, career, family, health ... a successful surgery, a restored relationship, a safe trip ... whatever you can think of. Pray BLESSINGS over their life!! This is LOVE! (Even if you never see or speak to them again - you can pray for their good!).
 - Praying for your offender's good is all that is REQUIRED. However, I hope that you can come to a place of healing where you can actually take it even one step further! I hope that eventually, you can both pray for the person's good, and also DO something to share the love of Jesus with them - even though they totally don't deserve it! Whether that is to visit them in prison and share the gospel with them, or mail them a bible or a book ... Or if it is to bring them a Starbucks at work (exactly the way you know that they order it), ... Or if it is to do what my friend did with his dad (this example is in the next chapter) but he was abused by his dad as a kid, but as an adult he asked his dad - his abuser- for forgiveness for the anger, bitterness, or hatred that he harbored in his heart. I just want to put it in your head that DOING an act of love is an option - regardless of how they respond. They may come into the Kingdom of Life by way of your action ... or they may hate you all the more. Who knows. Their response is really not your ultimate concern. Your ultimate concern is that YOU do what YOU are commanded to do by your King: Love Your Enemies.
 - Bonus: when we do this incredibly difficult task of loving our enemies, we will, as Jesus explains in Matthew 6:20-21, "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."



MEDITATIONS FOR FORGIVENESS THAT LEADS TO RELEASE

IF THIS PERSON IS A CHRISTIAN, VISUALIZE THIS...

You are at the foot of the cross. You have placed the book listing all of your sins at Jesus' feet. God has declared you to be righteous and forgiven as your book is covered by the drops of Jesus' blood. God has now adopted you as His own daughter or son.

Look to your right. There is the person you need to forgive. They too, are laying their book of sins at the feet of Jesus. In that book, there is a line ... perhaps a paragraph or an entire chapter about how they wronged you. God is declaring them righteous and forgiven as their book becomes covered in Jesus' blood. Can you trust God, in His infinite wisdom, with this? Can Jesus' blood shed for that person *be enough*?

Can you gratefully receive forgiveness for your own sins but deny that person the same joy? Look at your Savior! Look at His hands, His feet ... they were pierced for you ... and pierced for your offender. Do not add to *your* book of sins by holding your brother or sister liable for sins now covered by Jesus' blood.

What will you pray here?

IF THIS PERSON IS NOT A CHRISTIAN...

We are called to pray for those who persecute us.

Lord Jesus, have mercy on this person who has done me such harm! Their violation is in no way bigger than the violations You endured while on earth. Yet, on the cross, You asked our Heavenly Father to forgive the people who put you there! Oh Jesus, give me true forgiveness. Please reveal yourself to this person who violated me. They need their sins forgiven as mine were! Please lead them to you in repentance - whether or not they ever repent to me! Please bless this person and guide this person in a new life of righteousness instead of sin. Make their life a testimony of your love!

IF YOU CANNOT YET DO EITHER OF THOSE THINGS, CAN YOU PRAY THIS PRAYER?

Heavenly Father, I am not ready to begin forgiving _____ for _____.

I am hurt and feel _____. However, I know that you call your children to let your light shine through us, and forgiveness is your greatest act of love. You have loved me so much that you've forgiven ALL my offenses against you and against others. Please live through me and empower me to forgive _____. I don't know what that will look like or feel like, but I know that You can do it. And, by forgiving _____, I will be making a great blow against the foothold that demonic forces have in my life from this offense. Thank you for your massive love! Amen

NOTE: The next page is "the Forgiveness Journal Worksheet" that you can print over and over every time you need to work through it. But part of the process is also the meditations on this page. So my suggestion is to print this page out and put it in your journal, or hand write the meditations so that you have easy access to them. If they didn't really help you in your process, then don't bother. But they were transformative to me, so if they do help you, I suggest printing them for easy reference.



THE FORGIVENESS JOURNAL - WORKSHEET

1. Who do you need to forgive?
2. What did they do (or not do) ... or, What are they doing (or not doing)?
3. What do you believe they have robbed from you?
4. How has their offense affected you?
5. Why does this hurt? / What pain did this cause? (Don't skip this. It's important to identify).
6. What do you think your offender needs **to do** (apologize? Pay you back?), **or endure** (go to jail, go through the same pain they caused you?) **to 'make it right'?**

NOW IT IS TIME TO FORGIVE!!! And it is as simple as a prayer. You CAN OBEY Jesus and forgive your offender with a prayer. Please, for your own good, say your prayer or the prayer below **out loud**.

PRAYER:

God, I still hurt, I'm still mad, I still have all sorts of stress and emotions concerning this violation. But in obedience, I ask you to forgive this person and don't hold this thing they've done to me, against them. I release them from any obligation to apologize, or make restitution, or anything else. Now that I've forgiven them in the spiritual realms and disarmed the enemy in my life and in that person's life over this particular violation, Holy Spirit, please work with me to heal and then also forgive them with compassion. The legal part is complete. I pray that you will wipe this offense off their record, and also minister to them in whatever way they need help and healing. Please bring them into your family if they do not know you, or please increase their intimacy with you if they do. Help them to do good in this world and thus bring more glory to Jesus, instead of disrespecting His name. I ask this for my good, the good of this other person, and Your glory!



8. FORGIVENESS IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK

Let me clarify: Forgiveness is easier than you think, but healing can be extraordinarily difficult. I've yet to meet a single person who *feels* like they can forgive while they still *feel* the pain or negative emotions towards their offender. But for forgiveness to become uncomplicated, and dare I even say easy, we must untangle forgiveness from emotions and from healing. This final section may repeat a few things, but I hope it helps concepts to take root and help you on your journey.

Forgiveness is not dependent on you feeling peace over the situation, or having any nice feelings towards your offender. You see, the forgiveness that Jesus commands is the same kind as the writing off of a financial debt that someone owes you. You take the hit. It hurts. And you lay down your claim for repayment (justice) against the offender. It hurts, but forgiveness has been accomplished.

Forgiveness is this: to ask God to not hold the harmful act(s) of your offender against them. THIS IS THE COMMAND OF CHRIST. You're telling God - this person may have many other sins that you'll hold them accountable for, but THIS sin, THIS one against ME - I release. Do not hold THIS sin against them.

We are commanded to forgive. We're not commanded to feel good or reconcile or even heal. But if you do want to feel better, heal or even reconcile, forgiveness is not only commanded, it is the essential first step. You can not heal without first forgiving. Let me say that again:

You
can
not
heal
without
first
forgiving.

The act of asking God to remove this sin from your offender's book of sins is all you have to do to begin your path of healing. I know this hurts. I know it can be so insanely hard to ask God to forgive someone for something horrible. But I want this for you, because it is the only way that you can truly heal. I will say this with total confidence, based on the study of the whole council of the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and many holy documents outside of that, and much study on psychological health : if you obey Christ and forgive in this most basic form, you can begin to heal. If you do not forgive, you can spend a million dollars in therapy and you will not truly heal. It is impossible.

And remember, when you forgive - no matter how you feel about it - when you forgive, you strike a blow against the demonic forces in the other person's life, AND you strike a blow against the demonic forces in yours! That may sound normal to some readers, but others may say "do demons really even exist?" Well, we'll get into that soon. But according to the Bible, angels and demons exist and are still at war. The goal of God's enemies is to keep humans from knowing Him. And for those of us who do know him, their goal is to separate us from Him as much as possible, impede our growth, and diminish our effectiveness as ambassadors of Christ's Kingdom.

So, when you forgive, no matter how painful it is to do so, be encouraged!!!! Be encouraged because you have engaged in spiritual warfare to an extent far more than you realize. You are a warrior!! You are a badass Navy seal warrior in Christ when you forgive! I get so terrifically excited about this!! I cannot wait for you to get to that chapter! But let's take this one step at a time.

PRAYER

Jesus, forgiver of my sins, thank you for loving me even though I'm struggling to forgive. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me love _____ enough to pray for them. Help me to lay down my hurt and broken heart at your feet. Jesus you are the only one who can heal my hurt. Even the person who harmed me cannot do that. So I turn to you for strength. Give me the strength to pray for _____. Give me your insight so that I will pray effectively for _____'s good. Help me not to be snarky. Help me to pray for _____'s well being, and that _____ will love you and engage in their own healing with you. Right now, I know that _____ needs _____. Please help them in this situation. Help them to turn to you and depend on you. Thank you for your eternal love. Amen.

GOD BLESS YOU!

May you experience miracle after miracle as you embrace forgiving!



9. FORGIVENESS AS A WEAPON OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The book you're currently reading is called *The Forgiveness Workbook*. But it is part 1 of 3 in a larger book called *From Forgiveness to Healing*. Since some readers will only be downloading this free Forgiveness Workbook, I want to briefly address something here that I will explain far more thoroughly in the larger book. That is, the general concept of Spiritual Warfare and the role of forgiveness within it, and one specific application that is so important that I need to address it sooner than later.

I'm going to skip the long theological discussion that I would present to someone who does not believe that angels and demons are active today, and just briefly explain how I believe they operate and continue from there. If you need further understanding in order to accept what I say here, well, study further (in *From Forgiveness to Healing*, or elsewhere) and see if you can prove me wrong. But hopefully this will be straight forward, and what I say will be obvious to anyone who actively reads the Bible.

SUMMARY OF THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN A SINGLE PAGE:

God Created all that exists (the HOW is debatable, but the WHAT is not).

Humanity is uniquely designed with mental and physical capacities that enable us to have a highest level relationship with our Creator. We were created 'in His image' or 'like him' and the more we 'abide' with Him, the more we evolve to become more like Him (Sanctification/Theosis).

We do not know WHY Satan and legions of angels rebelled against God, (though later I'll explain the theology I subscribe to on this) but we do know that they did. And, one of them came to Eve and seduced her to disobey God. The result of which is that her children are born not citizens of Eden or Yahweh's Kingdom, but born slaves to the Demonic Kingdom of Earth. Even science has determined that humanity as we are today, all come from a single mother. So you are a descendant of Eve, and born a slave to Sin and Death.

But God so loved the world... that He chose another man through whom God would orchestrate the salvation of all who would choose to take the offer. He chose Noah... then Noah's descendent Abraham ... whose descendants became Israel, whose history we have logged in our Scriptures.

The other civilizations around the globe were led by demonic powers we refer to as gods. The Egyptians and Greeks and Native Americans and Asians and Celts ... people around the world have overlapping god-stories. This is not because ancient humans were stupid. Have you seen the things they built without our modern machines and technology? Have you heard of math and philosophy? Ancient people were worshiping demonic gods because demons were manifesting and showing themselves and doing things (usually cruel things) in order to prove that they had power. They ruled by fear. Sacrifices were made to appease them so that they would not harm people, far more often than out of some sort of honor; and never is it attributed to love.

But God's way was, and is, entirely 'other'. He forgives freely. He loves mercy. He commands His people to love justice, seek mercy, and take care of the most vulnerable (the "orphan and widow").

Even though His people group was a crazy nut bunch (like we all are) who kept going through cycles of loyalty and rebellion, God never abandoned them. He was (and is) faithful to His promises even if his beloveds are not. And eventually, God entered this world as a human in the prodigy of Noah and Abraham, as Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived as a man, fully dependent on the Holy Spirit, then died a death at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles, SO THAT he could enter Hades, fight the demonic powers of Sin and Death, WIN the battle, take the keys of Hades for Himself, and rise back to life in a resurrection body with all the additional capacities for eternal life (which is why He could pass through walls, transport from one place to another in a blink, and basically live among but defy the physics of this world). He then entered into the eternal space where He resides as the eternal King.

By doing this, He provided an option for slaves. He provides the option of staying a slave to sin and death, OR becoming a citizen of His Kingdom and a co-heir in His own family. If we take the option of citizenship and adoption, we get to enter a relationship with God, evolve to become better and better versions of ourselves, and participate with God in doing good in this world.

Now for a season, demonic powers have been handicapped but not eliminated. Eventually "when Christ returns" (again, not going to debate the how's on that one), we know that Christ will cast all demons into an eternal 'Lake of Fire' we refer



to as Hell. Jesus will be the ONLY authority remaining. But during this season in which we now live, demons still exist and still have power, but it has been limited BECAUSE of Christ's life, death, resurrection and establishment of His Kingdom on Earth.

And here I want to make a quick application then we'll bring all of this into our discussion on the power of forgiveness. As Christ followers became more in number, and traveled to new territories (whether by normal life circumstances or as missionaries), the demonic powers became weaker wherever Christ followers increased! This is not the 'convert or be killed' model (sorry well meaning but misguided crusaders). Rather, it is the model of living lives of love, in community, sacrificing for one another - all the ways Jesus teaches us to live. By living lives of love, we disarm the enemy in our own lives and the lives of others!

So many of the concepts we consider modern achievements originated 2,000 years ago with Jesus, and have just taken a really long time to evolve to what we have today. For example: Jesus was the first women's rights activist! Paul was too (I promise - when you understand Paul in the context of his culture, you'll understand how radically different he was in regards to women). Jesus was the first civil rights advocate! He came "for ALL men" not just Israelites. Not just the wealthy and the powerful. Not just any one group or nation. *"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* ~Galatians 3:26-29. And, the concept of "servant leadership" that is now a buzzword in corporate America, was a 'buzzword' for decades among Christian leaders, and (as you are probably well aware) originated with Jesus.

These are large cultural examples, but essentially, what happens is that the more Christ followers LIVE LIKE JESUS - living lives of LOVE (not angry nationalism or bombing abortion clinics - but love in action) the more we rob demons of their power, both in our own lives, the lives of those we engage with, and the culture in which we live!

When missionaries find themselves in cultures devoid of the gospel and Christ followers, they report far more overt demonic activity. In cultures that have been 'christianized,' demonic activity has to become more stealth. Demons are still at work, its just more subtle. Like a quote from a movie "The Usual Suspects" that says, "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was to make us think he doesn't exist".

OK. That was 2 pages. But I'm writing an entire 'part 3' on all of this which is much longer and in depth, so 'you're welcome' for the short summary. And here comes the application.

As you grow in your personal relationship with God, and live a life of love-actions in this world, you make demonic powers weaker. Think about any movie with a creature that gets more powerful based on someone's fear. It's like that. YOUR energy is constantly feeding someone or something other than yourself. Your energy is feeding demonic power, or the power of the Body of Christ, The Church. "But God is all powerful" you may argue. Yes, but His own design of how this world works is a collaboration. He created in collaboration (Father, Son, Holy Spirit all created together). And He designed mankind as His own life extension! We were designed to collaborate with God by living our best lives and doing GOOD in this world!

In our culture, many Christians are ignorant of the fact that a spiritual war is raging around us. Most of us are unaware of what spiritual weapons are. And, those of us who do know, are often unskilled at using them. God has (for whatever crazy reason) chosen to work out the salvation of this planet through His Children. So the sooner we understand the weapons of Spiritual Warfare, the better. But before we go there I have one thing I want to explain because I believe that when we understand this simple point, and start living in response to it, it is truly life altering.

HOW TO HARM A KING

If you were the sworn enemy of a powerful politician or king, what would be the best way to manipulate that ruler, or truly torture him? Would it be to capture him and slowly cut off each of his fingers? Maybe. But a far more profound torture would be to kidnap his child, turn on a video stream, and torture the child right before the ruler's eyes. We've seen this tactic in TV shows and movies, but if you are a parent, the mere thought of someone taking your child and harming them, could drive you insane. *This is what Satan tries to do to God by harming His children!!!*. "Robbing God of His glory in our lives" is how satan keeps us from growing close to our Heavenly Father. This is not *just* to harm you, it is Satan's ONLY way of "harming" God.



“But, God cannot be harmed”, some theologians will say. But this is the profundity of Love. God is Love, so if you harm his beloved, you harm Him by proxy. Satan can NOT directly harm God. But he can harm God’s Children. Satan cannot lie to God. But he can lie to God’s Children. Satan cannot change God’s love for us. But, he can draw our love to people or things over and above the love we have for God. Satan inflicts grief to God when he harms you or draws you away from experiencing the love and protection of the Father.

And that, my friend, is why Satan is after you.

You are treasured by God. Satan will do whatever he can to distract you from that, and to make you doubt that love, and lie to you about the character of God - so that we will not trust God enough to “abide” with Him and let Him walk us through this life in the best possible way - in the way of a powerful Father’s love.

JOURNAL

◆ This journal assignment is a little different than the others. Take a moment to ponder the fact that God loves you so very much that demons target you in order to hurt Him. Now don’t let that frighten you! For, “Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world” 1 John 4:4. Demonic powers have zero authority over you any more - unless you give it to them by sinning or listening to and responding to their lies with fear or sinful behaviors. But even then, you are marked by Christ, “sealed” by His blood. So can a demon “possess” you? No. You have the Holy Spirit instead of a demonic one. But can demons tempt you? Throw fearful thoughts at you? Draw you into self pity, depression, anxiety, fear of rejection, fear of failure, etc etc? Yes. Can they tempt you to ‘do it on your own’ instead of in partnership with God? yes. Can they tempt you with shame - which always puts a wedge between you and the one you feel shame with (God or others) yes. AND your sins can open you up to consequences of those sins (again, remember the dog trying to fly).

So you see, morality is not the goal. Morality is, frankly, trash. Abiding in Christ is the goal. Living a life receiving His love and sharing His love with others is the goal. Living a life of obedience is not remotely the same as morality. Living a life of obedience helps us to draw near to our beloved Savior, and acts as a shield against the “fiery arrows” of the enemy. The “breastplate of righteousness” protects our core because righteousness or ‘right living’ or living according to your design, protects you from both the consequences of trying to live outside our design (like a dog trying to fly), and also protects us from the accusations from the demons.

So especially if this concept is new to you, take a moment to journal and apply it to your own life.

WEAPONS OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE, SUMMARIZED

God’s Weapons of Spiritual Warfare are not guns and bombs or hate speech and yelling or any weapons of this world. The Weapons of Spiritual Warfare are (and I may be missing some)

- Standing firm in your identity as a Christ follower: Your citizenship is in Heaven, your God is your Heavenly Father, your King is your brother and your guide and comforter is Holy Spirit! Your identity as a Citizen of the Kingdom of Christ is far more important than any other part of your identity. (Also known as the Helmet of Salvation)
- The Fruit of The Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self Control
- Prayer, Intercession, & Meditation (3 different but related things. You can research this elsewhere)
- Blessings
- Fasting (adjacent to Prayer, Intercession, and Meditation, but a separate element)
- Speaking the Word of God to our selves, to others, and back to God Himself in Prayer (this includes “sharing the gospel” but is much more as well) (= Sword of the Spirit)
- Speaking the Word of God to demons if we feel we’re being attacked (= Belt of Truth)
- The Shield of Faith : ie believing God’s promises and acting accordingly, even when everything looks like those promises are not true. It is what Eve and Adam failed to do. Dig in your heels, and trust God instead of letting your circumstances define what you believe or trust.
- Obedience to Christ (this is not moralism, as we have discussed) Treating your self, others, and this planet with respect and love, and walking in an intimate relationship with Jesus. “RIGHTeousness” is living rightly. Remember

the dog who tried to fly. **Don't give the enemy opportunity to harm you because of your own sin and your sin's natural consequences!**) (= Breastplate of Righteousness)

- Love-in-word-and-deed towards all Christ Followers we encounter. (Ie not hating each other and bickering over denominational differences or politics or moral perspectives, etc) AND having a community of believers - this is protection! (This too = breastplate of righteousness because ultimately Love is the ultimate Law by which all our actions are defined. Our ultimate calling is to become like Christ - and God IS Love).
- Generosity and Hospitality
- Tithing and giving to the body of Christ, the Church (be it through donating time, talent or treasure)
- Worship (all forms in all denominations from Orthodox/Catholic (high liturgy) to Presbyterian or Brethren (somber liturgy) to Charismatic (singing and dancing). When we turn our attention and praise to Jesus, God is honored and demons run away! They hate it!
- Confession of sin
- Forgiveness

Each of the items I listed could have its own chapter, and maybe I'll write that book next. But for our purposes here, I'll share about forgiveness as a Spiritual weapon. This is going to be a very succinct discussion. A longer one is coming in Part 3 of *From Forgiveness to Healing*.

Forgiveness is a weapon of Spiritual Warfare because,

1. UN-forgiveness harms YOU! (Something the enemy wants, and God does not want)
2. Forgiveness leads to your healing (Something God wants and the enemy does not want)
3. Forgiveness lays down the claim you have against someone, which means Satan ("The Accuser") has no legal right to bring it up before God, or you, or that person.
 - Forgiveness closes a window that Satan could use to access that person's life
 - Forgiveness also closes a window to your own heart that Satan would access to sow bitterness, resentment, heartache, non-healing, depression, revenge, etc etc!
4. You can actually break generational curses (and the like) through forgiveness! I think most modern Christians don't understand blessing and curses. I will dive into this more in the larger book, *From Forgiveness to Healing*.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

Most people believe that curses have power - and they do! We might think of a curse as something that a witch or warlock or voodoo priest/ess or old Italian grandmother might put on you. Some people take this seriously and others think that its just superstition and nothing to bother with. But when it comes to Blessings, it seems that almost no one thinks that a blessing is anything more than just well wishing. But, the people within scripture believe that curses and blessings are both real and both have authority. That is why we see people in ancient history (like Jacob and Esau) who are extremely concerned about them.

Now, when I say "curses" you may think of someone putting a spell or hex over you. I believe those things to be very real, but there are other curses that are far more common that I want to address here, because if we do not know about them, then we can be unknown recipients of curses, and we may also, unknowingly, give curses.

Basically, when we harbor resentment, or speak ill of someone in a way that includes a wish for their harm, like, "I hope he hits a tree" to a rude driver, or if a father says in his heart (or out loud) to his son or daughter, "how dare you ask me for a loan you freeloading leach. You're not getting anything from me ever again" windows of opportunity are opened for the evil one to do whatever he does. I don't know how all that works in the spiritual legal system, and I don't know if people who claim to know actually know either. But I *do* know that it is real! So let's address it.

CHRIS'S STORY

I have a friend (I'll call this person Chris - no indication whether Chris is male or female) whose father took this person out of his will over a political argument. Now both persons are Christ Followers, so my friend maintained a relationship with



their father by choosing to not harbor offense over the matter, and by insisting that they never talk politics again. They kept their relationship and conversations focused on anything else but that. Now, the father is very wealthy. But my friend has perpetually struggled financially. My friend manages a very tight budget. So, their money issues were not for irresponsible spending. Rather, their money issues were more related to being the sole bread winner for the family and *not* getting appropriately paid for their skillset, being taken advantage of at work, someone stealing clients, sudden wack-a-do unexpected expenses ... my friend could just never really get out of the grind of living paycheck to paycheck. And every endeavor this person took, ended with negative or menial outcomes. Whereas, their father seemed to have the Midas touch.

Also the children from the father's 2nd marriage all thrived financially; whereas my friend and their siblings from their mother (the first wife) all struggled financially, even though they were all highly intelligent, talented, and hard working.

During a particularly intense financial crisis for my friend, it dawned on me that maybe this person may be unknowingly living under a curse from their father, that the father didn't even realize he'd made. I called a friend of mine about this, who co-runs a deliverance ministry called "The Father's Heart" DBA Unbound (I mention the name because i LOVE this ministry and if you want to investigate it, I highly recommend it!) He confirmed my theory.

My friend said that the more specifically we can identify offenses or actions that harm us by way of the nature of a curse, the better we can attend to it, and pray specifically for it to be released based on the blood of Jesus. So in this case, the instruction was to address the father's resentment of this person *and this person's mother*, and any words my friend knew of that the father had said like, "you'll never get anything from me again" or "the only reason you maintain a relationship with me is for my money" (which was not true) or "I hate (fill in the blank political party) and everyone in it!" (Which, of course, included my friend).

But then I had an ah-ha moment and asked, "So if my friend FORGIVES their father for every specific thing they can think of that relates to money/career/success, is that a curse breaker?" And my trusted advisor got excited and said, "YES! Absolutely your friend needs to exercise forgiveness!!"

So I worked with this person on identifying the specifics, and going through the process of lifting each and every thing they could think of, up to Jesus saying, "Please forgive my father for _____. Please bless me Heavenly Father, so that I can be a blessing to others instead of perpetually working long, hard hours just to scrape by! I want to be a generous person with my time and my treasure, but that means I need at least some margin. Please forgive my father and help him to succeed at whatever is "true, noble, right, **pure**, lovely, admirable, or praiseworthy" (Philippians 4:8). Please do not hold his sins against him. Please break the curse that has been blocking me from success in my career and been holding me back from working on my calling in your Kingdom. Lord, you are my Heavenly Father. My ultimate inheritance comes from You. My provisions come from You. And the blood of Jesus covers all sin and turns graves into gardens! Your power gives life to 'dry bones!' Please breath life into my situation, so that to Christ goes all the glory!"

My friend had already been working on forgiveness with me in general, so when we went through this process, there were some unexpected tears, but forgiveness was most successfully and eagerly offered. Now, no one's outcomes will ever be the same, but 48-hours later, my friend had a very unexpected phone call where they acquired a new client and a retainer was paid up front that covered a large portion of the financial crisis they were facing. And, about 3 weeks later, my friend's stepmom surprised my friend with a small (but very helpful) monetary gift (as she did every 5 years or so - but the timing was quite soon after this breakthrough - which was interesting to note).

TO JESUS BE THE GLORY!!

Now, at the time I am writing this book, this example is very fresh and new. So I cannot say what happened between my friend and their father next, but I EXPECT that there will be a surprise coming in that relationship as well. It may be financial, it may be relational, it may be something I can't even think up. But I'm pretty confident that since both persons are Christ followers, and both persons DO make the effort to maintain a decent relationship in spite of their differences, that the scene is set for *miracle* to occur between them as well.

10. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

The majority of this book is, for obvious reasons, about how to forgive. But we must be diligent to also ask for forgiveness. I'll make this super brief and end with a true story that exemplifies this with a miraculous outcome, Praise God!

REJECT SHAME

Guilt and shame are different.

Recognizing that you are guilty of something (be it a small infraction or a major crime) is just recognizing something you need to recognize. And, when you recognize you are guilty of something, your responsibility is to ask for forgiveness - both from the person(s) you harmed (again, be it small or big) and from God. You can't just ask God for forgiveness. Jesus is clear about this. Matthew 5:23-24 is within the context of "The Sermon On The Mount", and Jesus says, *"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift"*. In other words, even if you are about to ask for forgiveness from God but you have not yet asked for forgiveness from the person you harmed, go do that first! Then, come back and commune with God. Now, the person you harmed may not forgive you. But YOU have repented and asked for forgiveness, and attempted to reconcile. And what Paul explains is *"as far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"*. So you need to do your part, but that is all that you can do.

Now SHAME is a beast of epic proportions.

Shame is when you are guilty, but instead owning it and going to the person to repent and attempt to make things right or reconcile, shame leads you away from the repentance by fear and separation. Shame is why we hide from the person we wronged. It is why we feel embarrassed over something - even if that thing is simply a mistake and not even a sin (like tripping on some stairs in front of people or striking out when you're playing baseball, or saying something that makes people laugh at you in class). Shame can be mild or devastating. And shame NEVER comes from God. Shame is a tool from demons, not Holy Spirit.

You see, when Holy Spirit brings your guilt to mind, Holy Spirit will encourage you to repent and reconcile - both to the person and to God ... or if your violation is between you and God then Holy Spirit encourages you to repent and draw near to God, not run away from Him!

Here is a quick, personal example.

SHAME IN ACTION

I was given a grant from a Christian foundation to execute a project. Right after I received the check, everything that could go wrong, did. My life hit a huge, chaotic, overwhelming situation that knocked the wind out of me. And, each of the 3 women I'd recruited to help me execute this project all had big things happen that derailed their ability to start working on the project as well. So I didn't cash the check. I held on to it and was going to cash it when I knew we could begin working ... but fast forward almost a year later, and I just gave the check back to the foundation.

Now, I have a personal relationship with the Executive Director of that foundation. But for that year, I did not speak to her even once. I was so humiliated that I'd not executed the project. I was embarrassed, I felt like a failure or worse, a fraud. And, I knew with my entire being that she would forgive me. But, I just couldn't get myself to pick up the phone and set up a meeting to talk about what happened, and restore our personal relationship.

But then (Thank God) I saw that she was going to be the speaker at a monthly lunch-meeting of pastors that I attend. I was actually going to skip that month but when I saw she was speaking I made sure to go. And praise Jesus, as I was parking my car, I saw her and her associate getting out of hers. So I intercepted them in the parking lot, and immediately began apologizing and explaining. And you know what she did? She gave me a giant hug and told me to call her assistant and set a meeting at the first available time.

That could have been accomplished months earlier, but because of shame, I hid instead of repented. And whether it is between you and another person, or you and God, when you see shame creeping into your mind, KICK IT OUT! It is a deplorable tool of Satan to separate and destroy you. A predator will target an animal straggling behind the pack or separated from the herd. Our demonic predators love shame because it leads us to separate ourselves from God and/or from other people.

So when you repent to someone, even if your repentance to that person is met with anger or the refusal to forgive, you are only responsible for your own actions, not theirs. So, you can repent to them, then to God, and then pray for healing within the relationship. And, you can WORK for healing in the relationship if it is one that matters to you! Do your part. Let God take care of the rest.

I'm going to end with one of the most beautiful stories of forgiveness that I've witnessed. I hope it brings you additional enlightenment, hope, and courage.

A TRUE STORY OF REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS, AND SALVATION!

Here I can use real names because this friend tells this story openly and often, and it has an amazing outcome.

Jim and my dad met in college and have been best friends ever since. Jim grew up in coal-country Pennsylvania. His dad was a very mean drunk. He beat his wife and Jim. So Jim took out his anger on the football field, and became a full scholarship football player at ASU, and was recruited to NFL training camp (though was cut on the very last day). He was a scrappy, 5'7 fighter who was feared (literally feared) by every football player at ASU after he knocked out on someone twice his size who started a fight with him. In his Jr or Sr year of college, Jim became a Christian and the angry man became the most kind and gregarious man I have ever met in my life. Hanging out with him and my dad is what taught me how to make people feel like a million dollars. He showed me by action, how to treat a homeless person with the same respect as the president of a company. To this day, I've never met anyone like him. He genuinely loves everyone he meets, he actively (physically) defends women (even strangers), and if you put him in a room of 100 people he doesn't know, he'll be introducing people to each other within a half hour.

Now, apparently, before I was born, someone challenged Jim to love his dad. But his dad was the one person on the planet he truly hated. And, Jim thought he would never forgive his dad nor speak to him again. But the Holy Spirit convicted him. So he took a trip to see his dad ... and ask for his dad's forgiveness.

Yes, you read that right - the man who, as a young boy used to get in between his mother and father to take the beating intended for his mum, went to ask the abuser for forgiveness.

When Jim asked for his dad's forgiveness, his dad was shocked and said, 'why are you asking me for forgiveness? I should be asking YOU for forgiveness'. To which Jim replied, "I am asking forgiveness for all the hatred I harbor in my heart for you. And even if you are 99% responsible for the situation, I need to own 100% my 1%. And, I need to own 100% of the hatred in my heart".

Now, I don't know if it was that day or some time later, but this encounter opened the door for Jim Jr to share the gospel with his dad, and Jim Sr. ended up giving his life to Christ! Jim Sr. stopped drinking, and when I met him a decade or 2 later, he was just as kind and sweet and jovial as his son! I would have NEVER EVER guessed that he had once been a raging, wife beating, alcoholic.

God is the God of Miracles!! And many of them start with forgiveness!!

CONGRATULATIONS

You have completed the Forgiveness Journal. You may feel some relief, you may feel a good bit of healing ... or you may feel like crap. But we are not commanded to FEEL any sort of way, ever. We are commanded to Love (action that may or may not be accompanied by feelings of affection) we are commanded to Do Good in this world (summary of all the commands, really), we are commanded to Worship (again, this is an action that may include a spectrum of emotions both pleasant and painful - but we worship and rejoice anyways!), we are commanded to pray, to rejoice, to be thankful ... all of which are actions that may have happy feelings connected to them, or not. We are commanded to DO these things irregardless of feelings. So too, we are commanded to forgive. And if you were able to pray that prayer (or one of your own), out loud, in regards to your offender, you have obeyed the command to forgive.

This is the end of Book 1. This is what is free online. So please, if it is helping you, share it with those you know and love. It will be included in other books I write, but will always, itself, be free online. If you do not have the entire Book, I encourage you to purchase a physical copy, an audio book, or as a digital book. Because there, you'll have Book 1 - The Forgiveness Journal; Book 2 - From Forgiveness to Healing, and Book 3 - The Theology of Forgiveness.



NEXT STEPS

Now, you may choose to move on to the work of healing.

If you desire to heal, please join my patreon.com community where you will have access to the entire book *From Forgiveness to Healing* in a variety of formats: a downloadable PDF, a computer 'flip-book', an audio book presented as podcast episodes, live group sessions (online), and you can even book personal counseling/coaching sessions (when I have client openings)!

You can access that website here: patreon.com/D4V

*D4V stands for Designed For Victory - which is my ministry.

You can learn more about that on the Patreon site, or at Designed4Victory.com

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MAY GOD BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY!!

~CAROLYN



The Forgiveness Journal

FORGIVENESS REQUIRES MORE THAN WE CAN MUSTER IN OUR OWN STRENGTH

Quite often, we will not have the ability to forgive as Christ commands us to forgive. So how can God command us to do something that we are not able to do? Well, on our own strength we cannot do it. But the beauty of God giving us a command that we cannot accomplish by ourselves, is that we must depend on Jesus & His Holy Spirit to give us what we need to obey the command! So let me repeat this: Forgiveness, real Christlike forgiveness, is NOT something you can do on your own! You **MUST** depend on the Holy Spirit to empower you to forgive! Forgiveness is the ultimate way in which we reflect God, and can only be accomplished in partnership with God!

This is good news! In fact, its amazing news! All that frustration you feel when you know you should forgive, but can't seem to; or the dagger you feel in your stomach when you try to forgive but the pain of the offense still resides in you ... it's ok (sort of) because it just goes to show that you cannot do this on your own. So **do not pile guilt on yourself for not being able to forgive as you ought to. Instead, reject the guilt and take your desire to forgive, to God. When you go to Him, bringing your desire to forgive, He WILL help you through your process to do so. And, it will PLEASE Him to help you!**

Carol has played an absolutely instrumental role in my life and in the growth of my faith as a female Christian role model, prayer warrior, spiritual compass, and fountain of biblical knowledge. She is unforgettable because her faith defines who she is and her passion for Christ is impossible to ignore. Carol not only has a heart for the Lord, but she has a heart for people. Her faith and enthusiasm attracts others to her, and she fully embraces them with a unique blend of spiritual mentor, nurturing mother, and cool big sister, all rolled into one. ... She is exactly the person I hoped she would be as I watched her the first time I saw her on stage.

~Dr Stephanie K.

Through Carol's leadership, I was able to feel empowered enough to search deeply for the sake of growing spiritually.... She saw me evolve from a scared and spiritually starved individual to an empowered follower of Christ

~Reyna

Carol does her research. She makes sure if she's going to put her mind and heart into a thing, she's going to do her homework. And to me, that means a lot. There are no off-the-cuff, careless suggestions that come from some misguided sense of conventional wisdom. She listens, she sympathizes, and she tries to approach a problem from a different angle -- with education and knowledge in her utility belt.

~Jean



**Carolyn
Scott**