



A New Mindset for Forgiveness

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The Healing Room

Welcome to the Healing Room! Let's begin by asking a very important question: Have you forgiven everyone who has ever hurt, harmed, or wounded you? Most of us squirm a good amount when asked this question. Many people I've spoken to will say not really when answering. Would you agree that we really do NEED to forgive the people who have harmed us?

In my own journey in forgiveness, I felt I needed a place-to-go when feeling overwhelmed or distraught, or anxious about the people who caused me great harm in my own life. At times, I have struggled mightily with forgiving others and regularly prayed to our Lord for assistance. I wanted to visit a figurative place with practical tools I could use to find reconciliation and closure from the ugly events and harsh words of the past. I wanted to visit a place of comfort filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord HAS provided me such a place to go on a regular basis. Our Lord led me to a place I call the **"Healing Room."** I'm hoping your own visits to the Healing Room will be as helpful for you, as they have been for me.

I've observed that many people are still harboring grudges and various forms of unforgiveness toward others who have caused hurt or harmed. The purpose of this Workbook is to provide tools, resources and practical suggestions for people who may be stuck in what I describe as the hard-hearted edge of holding on to Grudges, Resentments, Unforgiveness, and Bitterness (GRUB).

Our Lord Jesus desires helping us to be set free from all the ravages, ugly thoughts, and behaviors of harboring the typical criticism and judgments we typically direct to people who have harmed us. We must desire a new heart and mind to forgive others, and Jesus has His arms outstretched to help us.

I've realized that a significant portion of my own personal spiritual formation has come from dealing with forgiveness issues, both for others, and myself. I can honestly tell you that I wish I'd found ways to forgive others far sooner. This hanging onto GRUB for far too long is a true regret of my life, and I hope the words and ideas in this Workbook may assist you. I do know from personal experience that the harboring of the poisons of unforgiveness is no way to live, and robs us of His peace and joy right now.

From personal experiences, I've seen that a tremendous amount of the dysfunction and misery in our lives comes from unreconciled relationships. People harmed or hurt us badly. We may have suffered from severe abuse. Harsh and mean words were spoken to us. Others behaved very badly with us. No apologies were offered, and the perpetrators of hurt seem to be oblivious to the damage they created in us. We really do need to find ways to reconcile and find closure with these relationships, and they don't always include going to a person to talk-it-out. In many cases, personal contact is impossible, or the ones who hurt us are no longer alive. We'll talk about specific tools for forgiving in the following chapters.

The Workbook is a detailed look at forgiveness issues. Grappling with these issues is hard work, and it's not much fun, however, I've seen time and time again that the people who engage in the work have become truly



blessed. What they once thought impossible IS possible through the healing power of our Lord Jesus. They have been truly set free!

I encourage you to work through the exercises at your own pace, and be introspective about what you are reading and experiencing. Study the suggested scriptures. Share with other mature Christians, and find a mentor who has dealt with forgiveness issues. Attempt to reconcile with the people who harmed you. Take on the mind of Jesus as you consider forgiving others or yourself.

Shall we go to work on forgiveness?

What is Forgiveness? Let's look first at what it is NOT:

It is NOT overlooking, ignoring, or denying what has hurt or offended us. It does not mean that our anger needs to disappear. It's also:

- NOT excusing or condoning damaging or wrong behavior.
- NOT trivializing the trauma or lessening the pain we have experienced.
- NOT forgetting hurts and harm from others, nor pretending they did not happen.
- NOT restoring trust with someone who hurt us, or that we need to have an ongoing relationship with that person.

(Source: Let-it-Go Workbook by TD Jakes)

What is Forgiveness?

A definition I like comes from the philosopher Joanna North of Great Britain: **“When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence, and love; as we give these, we as forgivers realize that the offender does not necessarily have a right to these gifts”.** (From the book *Forgiveness is a Choice*, by Robert Enright)

Identifying Forgiveness Challenges

Forgiveness challenges for me began in childhood. I am the oldest of three children from a dysfunctional, alcoholic family. I learned along the way that both of my parents had alcoholic fathers. My big issues mostly resided in my relationship with my mother. She was critical, judgmental, and difficult to be around. She loved control, and would manipulate her way around life to get what she wanted, and would subject her children to this unfair treatment. I never liked it then, and can spot the control freaks around me now a mile away!

The other forgiveness problem from childhood was my Dad. He had come from a painful childhood with a mean--drunk father. His own unresolved pain caused him to drink to numb his wounds. In the process, I felt he abdicated his role of being a father. He forced his oldest son (me) into having to deal with his wife--- my own mother. It was WWII with her all the time!



Normal family life involved arguments, fights, quarrels, rancor, and slammed doors. There were no apologies, no hugs, and very little encouragement. I had the sense early on that this was NOT how things were supposed to work. From the time I was about 12 years old on, I was gone a lot--- to school, to the baseball field, basketball courts, anywhere but being at home. In retrospect, these choices probably saved me from sucking in more of the dysfunction. It did create a strong desire in me to be independent, and away from this crazy family life.

Over many years, I've thought a good deal about the unfairness of being raised in such a family. This can mean a slippery slope of "why me?", or "look what I had to endure", or a sense of entitlement because the world now "owes me". We'd all agree that living in the "victim mode" is just no way to live. We all need to be Set Free. Jesus will help us, if we ask.



What Does Jesus Want to Teach Us About Forgiveness?

- We have been forgiven by Jesus ourselves. (See Luke 5:17-25) The key words here are: **“Young man, your sins are forgiven”**. Do we accept His forgiveness?
- Jesus asks us to repent of all our own wrongdoing and sins in our relationships with others. If we have repented, Jesus has forgiven us. See 1 John 1:8-10: **If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that His Word has no place in our hearts.**
- Jesus asks us to forgive others. Jesus reminds us that if do not forgive others, that our father cannot forgive us. See Mt. 6:14-15: **“But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins”**.
- Our Lord reminds us that the “harboring” of the GRUB can destroy our own well-being, and can adversely affect our mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health. See Hebrews 12:15: **“Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many”**.
- Jesus desires to help us be **“Set Free”**. We can be released from all anxiety and all the adverse feelings of unforgiveness. It’s like being released from prison after many years of incarceration. Imagine being let out! (See Psalm 119:45; Ephesians 1:7-8, and Romans 8:31-39)
- Jesus wants to teach us about His love for others and ourselves. Despite the sin-filled behaviors and wrongs done to us, we can begin to learn to love others as Jesus does. We need His Power to do so. See Roman’s 12:9-13: **“Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.**
- Jesus wants to help us be **“delivered from bondage”** related to forgiveness issues. We can remain trapped or imprisoned by harboring non-forgiveness. We can carry around a Bag of Rocks due to our refusals to forgive. Then the evil one whispers that we cannot forgive others. We can depend on Jesus’ supernatural power and grace to assist us in the tough work of forgiving. (See Ephesians 6:10-20--- putting on the Armor of God.)
- As we become better equipped to forgive others, we get better at dealing with very challenging people who we will inevitably meet. We can develop a more “forgiving heart” for all other people. We can become **“automatic forgivers”**. (See Matthew 18:21-22... becoming 7x70 kinds of forgivers.)



- Jesus wants to teach us to live by the Golden Rule--- that we can come to treat others as we'd like to be treated.
- We come to LIVE OUT the fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness, and Self-Control. Living these becomes an excellent barometer for how we are doing with forgiving others, or ourselves. (See Galatians 5:22-23)
- We realize that Our Lord desires to PROVIDE His Peace and Joy in our lives. While we harbor all the poisons of GRUB, it's impossible to truly enjoy all His Blessings. We remain distracted, with a compulsion to look back at all the ugliness of what happened to us.

What do you think Jesus wants to teach you about forgiveness?



Part One Reflections

What happened to cause us hurt and harm? Why did the offender's do what they did?

What happened to create hurt, harm, or wounds in us? Think about specific words, circumstances, or behaviors from just one person who has harmed you. Who is the person you have had the most difficulty forgiving?

What words from below resonate?

- Cheated
- Abused
- Abandoned
- Unjustly treated
- Disappointed
- Criticized unfairly
- Scapegoat
- Ignored/overlooked
- Violated
- Spoken to with harsh words
- Betrayed
- Subjected to vile and obnoxious behaviors

Other people were:

- Arrogant
- Rude
- Nosy
- Boorish
- Vile
- Harsh
- Intense
- Controlling
- Obnoxious
- Defensive
- Egotistical
- Narcissistic
- Vindictive
- Hostile
- Angry
- In denial
- Insolent
- Unreliable
- Unrepentant
- Bullies
- Godless
- Manipulators
- Selfish
- Illogical
- Unreasonable
- Mean
- Nasty
- Overbearing
- Offensive
- Insensitive
- Hateful

Questions to consider... How were you treated? What caused you to be hurt, injured or wounded? Who is the one person you have had the most difficulty forgiving? Write some details here:



Why did the Harmers hurt us? (Offenders are people who inflicted harm.)

Consider why this person harmed or hurt you. Why did they do what they did?

A few possibilities:

Hurt people, hurt people... those still in pain themselves often lash out and act badly around the people next to them. They feel they must take it out on someone, and unfortunately, that person might have been us.

Example of this behavior: Jolene was a competent bookkeeper for a large service club in her town. Her son died in an unfortunate accident, and she suffered from an unfriendly divorce. She was bitter, angry, and lonely. She was often moody and demanding in meetings--- and thought nothing of publicly criticizing others. She lashed out at others frequently in a vicious and nasty tone. She always wanted to get her way, and when she didn't, got up and left in a huff. Jolene was dragging a lot of baggage around in her life. She had been hurt profoundly, and wanted to take it out on others.

They didn't know what they were doing... related to the above. Many people in pain are often quite oblivious to their own words or actions, and how they impact others around them.

Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing".

Example of this behavior: Frank went to work for a large west coast life insurance company, as a new sales agent. The General Manager (Joe) for the sales agency had been in the business a long time. Frank became disappointed in Joe's lack of mentorship for him, and soon learned that he was only considered an entity for Joe, who could make \$ for Joe, based on the override Joe received on Frank's sales. In addition, Frank learned that Joe could be very vindictive, exacting revenge on people when Joe did not get his way. Joe was oblivious to the negative impact he had on others. He "knew not what he was doing".

Tainted outlook... some people can be tainted by or caught up in the ways of the world. For example, they might be relentlessly determined to succeed in climbing the corporate ladder. If they see us in their way of climbing to the top, they can say hurtful and damaging words, or act in ways which are obnoxious or toxic, and can also often be selfish and narcissistic. Some feel they are just better, smarter, and superior to everyone else around them. **See James 4:1-3: What is causing the fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to get it. And even when you ask you don't get it because your motives are all wrong--- you want only what will give you pleasure.**

Ignorant of God... perhaps with little or no relationship with Jesus, some people can act without any controls on what they do or say to others. Christians are called to a higher level of constraint, patience, and humility with others. Without a relationship with God, they can just easily fall prey to the "ways-of-the-world" by saying or doing anything they want, despite the harm it may be doing to others. (Please check out Matthew 22:29: Jesus says to some of the scholars of His day..." **You are badly misled because you are ignorant of the**



Scriptures, and the power of God!" Also: 2 Corinthians 6: 14-16: Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

Example of this behavior: Dave is an elderly gentleman in his community, who loves music. He belongs to a group of fellow music lovers. A boisterous lady in the group recently said some unfair and mean things about Dave, which are false. Dave is taking all this very hard, and very personally. His wellbeing of late has been destroyed. He can't seem to let this go. This situation has him very bothered and annoyed. He keeps playing his grievance story to anyone who will listen. He does not know how to just move on from these ugly events.

Sins of the Father... (See Exodus 34:6-7) An excuse for hurtful behaviors can come from a mindset of, "well, I come from long lines of raging alcoholism (or some other family dysfunction) and these are the cards I've been dealt, and there is nothing I can do to change it". We all know that this is patently false. Anyone can change, if they make the decision to do so.

Example of this behavior: Sally came from an alcoholic family, and was very angry about her life and situation. She had a bitter divorce in her early 20's. In her mind, this ruined her life. Many years later, she had a child out of wedlock. She struggled with finding work, and became convinced by a quack doctor that she was "disabled", and should qualify for Social Security disability. After many attempts, she never received these benefits, however, is now a "ward of the government", living in Section 8 Housing, and receives welfare since she is raising a minor. She is convinced that her issues are the fault of her parents (both alcoholics), and that she could never "elevate" her own standing in life. She is a perpetual victim of her ancestry. She is stuck in a mindset of never improving herself because of her family of origin.

Questions to consider...Why did the people who harmed you do so? What do you need to UNDERSTAND about the person who injured you?



Part Two Reflections

How do we feel about what happened to us?

How do we feel about the hurt, wounds or damage done to us? Here are some possibilities:

- **Anger, fury, wrath, or rage...** We can be as mad as hell, and suffer from bitter brooding over wrongs done to us. We may be in a regular state of being annoyed or aggravated. **See James 1: 19-21: Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters. You must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.**

Example of this behavior: In the early 90's, Peter joined a small financial services firm, to join up with his business mentor. There was a handwritten agreement going into the new workplace. Soon after joining, the deal changed, making it more expensive for him to be part of the firm. He was naïve enough to feel that a handshake was as good as a written agreement. In this case, nothing could be further from the truth.

After a few months of hard work, with promises made about compensation, Peter was cheated out of substantial amounts of money. He had worked very hard to deliver new revenue to the firm, however, never saw a nickel of compensation. He became very anger and bitter about what happened, and had great difficulty letting it go. He later figured out that a big part of his problem in the relationship with his mentor was that he had elevated this person into the role of the father figure he never had. To be cheated and betrayed by this person was a double whammy of hurt and injury. This was painful.

- **Filled with hopelessness, despair, dismay, or even depression.** We might feel anguish or considerable resentment which is stuck in our craw. We are certainly not experiencing much joy in our lives. We are not sure what to do about all this angst stuck in our gut. We just wish it would all go away.

Example behavior: Tony is a very skilled financial advisor, helping other planners with complicated insurance solutions for their clients. Most of the work Tony did was by phone or email. On a regular basis, Tony would just disappear---not responding to calls or emails. In getting to know him well, I discovered that his fractured relationship with his living mother was a probable source of his depression. He has not forgiven her, nor done any serious thinking about what to do next. After a very tough childhood, Tony has buried a lot of the ugliness of the ways he was raised as a child. None of this had been addressed. There have been no resolutions in the poor relationship he has with his mom. He just kept kicking the can down the road, hoping things would get better on their own. They didn't, and he remains depressed regularly.

- **Desire to judge, condemn** or have contempt for the people who harmed us. Our well-being has been disrupted or destroyed, and we sure want to blame the people we believe have harmed us. We continue to feel deep animosity or antagonism to the people who hurt us. We might be saying: "I will never forgive them!"



Example behavior: Joe grew up in a tough dysfunctional family environment. He had to learn to fight a lot to survive childhood. This has contributed to his judgmentalism. A good friend reminded him..." **Joe, you are a lot more judgmental than you need to be**". Joe has learned that judgmentalism about anyone else is unwarranted. None of us truly understand anyone else, much less ourselves. Judging others may just be way to puff up our own fragile ego's. Healthy discernment about others (and ourselves) is far superior to judgments. **Matthew 7:1-5 reminds us: Do not Judge, lest ye be judged!!**

- We might be tempted **inflict serious physical harm** to the people who harmed us. We may feel like punching them out. (It's best not to do so!)
- **Exploited and violated.** We trusted someone, and they did not do as promised. We became VERY disappointed. We wonder... how did I ever trust this person?

Example behavior: Jacob and Mary have known Ralph for many years. At times, Ralph has been very helpful and caring. By the same token, he has also taken advantage of his prior kindness, and has manipulated the relationship by insisting on certain behaviors. Mary has worked for Ralph in the past, and was always grossly underpaid. Now, Jacob and Mary are at their wits end about what to do with Ralph. As Christians, they certainly recognize their call to forgive, however, often feel more like doormats for Ralph's control freak behaviors. Friends have suggested they "disengage" from Ralph, however, they have had difficulty doing so.

- **We may insist on getting revenge, payback, or a desire to "get even".** We want (at the least) an apology, or expect restitution for our losses. We might resort to an eye-for-an eye mindset. We want to retaliate. We want them to feel the pain we feel--- to get even.

Example behavior: Larry was the manager of a real estate agency. He had many agents working with him. On a regular basis, some of agents did things Larry did not like. He founds ways to "exact revenge" by holding up earned compensation, or by withholding services. In addition, Larry could just exhibit the old "cold shoulder" treatment or even bad mouth his agents behind their backs. He always felt he needed to retaliate for what he perceived as bad behaviors of others.

- **Filled with anxiety, aggravations, and regular agitation.** We are easily annoyed. We've not yet sorted out how to reconcile or resolve the issues we have related to our grudges, resentments, unforgiveness, and bitterness.

Example behavior: Sam is a former teacher who has had a very close relationship with his mom. She married again late in life to a fellow who Sam felt did not treat her well. He's never let this go. Sam is often testy, surly and unpleasant. His language is often laced with profanities. He is a very angry man and is quite difficult to be around.



- **We might be moody, defensive, dour or hyper-critical of others or ourselves.** The slightest provocation may set-us off into a fit of rage. We go ballistic easily.
- We might feel **personal guilt or shame** for our own actions which might have contributed to the harm we've suffered such as, how could I have been so stupid? Or, why didn't I see this coming?

Example behavior: **Henry** is a wonderful person who works very hard as an Emergency Room nurse. Like most of us, he has had periods in his life, for which he is not proud. He did drugs, and carried on in relationships, marriages etc. He has regularly beat himself up badly. He has worked himself into a frenzy as a type of penance for sins from his former life. He has not fully realized that Jesus has fully forgiven him for all the wrongdoing of his past life. Any of us can be stuck in what we did, or did not do. Our loving Lord wants to set us free IF we allow Him to do so.

Example behavior: **Fred** has blamed himself for the death of his brother many decades ago. He was to take his brother fishing, and something happened which prevented him from doing so. His younger brother was hit by a car in an accident, and died. Fred has carried this blame (and shame) for his brother's death all these years. Until recently, he could not forgive himself. He'd never asked forgiveness from Jesus. Fred is finally seeking and accepting this forgiveness from Jesus, and is being Set Free.

- **Desire for escape, sanctuary or refuge?** We may mistakenly think that a change in environment, a move, a new marriage, or new place will solve all our problems. (The bags of rocks get dragged along with us--- if not resolved.) Our internal question repeats itself: what will have to happen for all this anguish to go away?
- **Woe-is-me victim-hood and "pity-pot".** A common question posed is, "why did all this happen to me?"
- **Entitlements.** Since we were not in control when being harmed, we now demand being in control of our lives, and feel that we should get everything we want or desire. We feel we should be able to do whatever we want, anytime we want. We can become VERY materialistic and go buy things we do not need. This might be a kind of "payback" for all that has happened to us. The world "owes us" for all that we endured.
- **Distracted.** We pour ourselves into other activities (work, hobbies, exercise, cars, boats, golf, home repairs, church), so that we don't have to think about what happened to us. We keep ourselves BUSY! There may be a level of self-dishonesty or even denial happening here. Forgiveness issues get buried and are never addressed.
- **Profound sadness?** We could become very sad about hurtful events and people in our past lives. We might be brought to tears over the words and actions of others, or for our own failures in certain relationships



which caused us so much harm. I have regularly returned to the scripture verses in Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus invites us to "come to Him when we are weary and burdened".

- We might be feeling like **God was absent** during all these times of harm. We wonder if God has allowed these things to happen, or we might be bellowing... "and you (God) allow this person to get away with all these behaviors?" We might even "blame" God for what happened! (God is NOT to blame!)
- **Our personal well-being has been destroyed** by what has happened to us. We have trouble "getting it out of our heads" and have difficulty in moving on with life in the present. We are looking for answers knowing that how we are feeling is just not right.

As you meditate on your own life experience, do any of the above feelings resonate with you? Please write some notes about how you feel. Be very honest with yourself. Our personal therapy involves our willingness to take a sober look at all that has happened, then make decisions about moving forward, to be set free.



How Are We Acting Out?

Because of the feelings we still have over harm done to us, we might feel compelled to act out. What are some common ways we might act out (behave) if we have not fully reconciled with the people who harmed us?

- **Actions based on anger.** We are steeped in seething rage. We have allowed the harm we've sustained to fester into deep bitterness and resentments. We go nuts over minor life events.

Example behavior: Jane is a former high school teacher. She was involved in a service club in her community, where she became a member of the board of directors. Her words and actions just exuded unresolved seething rage. Although she truly has a servant's heart, her internal rage about her past life was off-putting to everyone around her. She was offensive, rude and surly in most situations. I'm sure many people wanted to ask--- what are you so mad at? People just stayed away from Jane, or just said... "well, that's just the way she is."

- **Venting and ranting about others,** using colorful language. Gossip and slander flow easily. We feel a need to get things off our chests.

Example behavior: Rick is a prominent executive in his area. He regularly rides his bike with his buddies. He'd often loudly criticizes his wife and family members about things they did, which did not meet his standards. He loves to be in control of everything and everyone around him. The tone coming out of him was filled with anger and laced with loud profane adjectives. There were many complaints about many other aspects of life in our current world. His fellow riders had to wonder..."what the heck is going on with this guy? Why all the loud rants and venting?" Clearly, there were causes and reasons for all these words and behaviors. My experience indicates hurts, wounds and pain which have not been fully resolved. Rick lives with Unfinished Business from his life. Reconciliation with past hurts will help him to enjoy peace and joy now. Forgiveness of others and himself will be keys in moving on.

- **Lost interest in exercise,** then health which deteriorates, then complaining bitterly over our loss of health. Lots of lethargy and procrastinations!
- **Defensiveness.** We will NOT tolerate any criticism from anyone about anything. We feel we have been criticized enough.

Example behavior: Ken is a talented person who can fix or build just about anything. In a recent project, he didn't like the time it was taking for certain things to happen. The tone of his emails just exuded anger and disappointment. He threatened to quit the project if the pace did not pick up to his liking. We all wonder what happened to Ken to cause all this rage over minor events.

- **Weight gain due to overeating or gluttony.** We just cannot stop eating. Our pain is still too raw in us. It's an example of trying to bury our pain in food.



Example behavior: Diane is an attractive wife of a friend, who had a very poor relationship with her earthly father. She remains angry, bitter, and resentful toward him. It seems that her method to deal with pain was to eat and eat. She gained a lot of weight.

A few years ago, we saw Diane at a chance occurrence. She had gained so much weight that she was barely recognizable. She seemed to be twice the size of the woman we remembered from years before. The ravages of unforgiveness can affect our physical well-being. We need to find ways to move past the deep-seated impacts of non—forgiveness.

- **Excessive use of alcohol or drugs**--- an attempt to mask or numb the pain we are in causing addictions to things which are not good for us.

Example behavior: Both of my parents had fathers who were alcoholics. They were mean to their families, especially when drinking. They had failed relationships, which were never reconciled, never resolved. Both my parents drank excessively in my view, to mask or numb their own pain. Their pain was then passed along to their children. By the GRACES of God, I've never had a drinking problem. The use of alcohol just scares me to death.

- **Overspending on credit cards** and/or buying unnecessary things to fill a void. Deceived into thinking that materialism will solve our issues. Whatever we have now is never enough. The world OWES US for all the pain we have endured.
- **A dour, negative, cantankerous, or critical personality**--- an indication of pain not resolved or reconciled. We carry a chip on our shoulder on a regular basis. There is not much joy in this life.
- **Challenging others with direct questions** which carry an offensive tone. Always needing to be right and in control.

Example behavior: Mark is an elderly gentleman, who still loves to ride his bike a lot. He is well read, and smart. However, in his presence you detect unmistakable rage just oozing out of his very being. His conversations are short, stilted, critical and often negative. One fellow was joking with him about his former days of being a rugby player---trying to poke a little fun at him. His nasty response was..." I beg your pardon"? Everyone must walk on eggshells, when around Mark. We all wonder---what happened to cause all this rage?

- **Very high levels of drama** in our lives. Life is filled with tension and unease. Others around us are always walking on eggshells. Others might say: "well, that's just the way they are..."
- **Direct and curt questions to others**, or in answers provided. Our responses could be considered rude, discourteous or even offensive. It's hard to hide the levels of rage we still carry around.



Example behavior: Kathleen is a mover and a shaker, always consumed with new projects. Due to a failed relationship with her earthly father, she remains rather offensive. She can still be in a social gathering and find ways to offend just about everyone present. Her rage at her father gets transferred to other people. She lashes out at others. The pain runs deep, and I'm quite sure she is unaware that she is offending anyone within earshot. She is oblivious to what she is doing, while being STUCK in unresolved pain.

Questions to consider:

As you look over these behaviors, do any of these resonate with you? Are you acting out yourself? Do you see these behaviors in others?



Part Three Reflections

How are we behaving because of the wounds we have sustained?

Realizations in Forgiveness

While we harbor GRUB, we need to come to realize a few things:

- We are being **robbed of living in the joy of a life in Jesus right now**. If we continue to be distracted by the hurts of the past, we may find it impossible to be joyful here and now.
- We come to realize **that harboring GRUB is a colossal waste of time and energy**. If we expect to receive an apology (very rare!) or receive the \$'s owed to us, or to receive just recompense --- we could be waiting an awful long time. It's better for us to DROP IT and move on with life.

Example behavior: Ted had been cheated badly by a former business associate. The handshake agreement over agreed upon new business created by Ted was totally ignored. He confronted his former partner on a few occasions, only to hear lame excuses as to why he hadn't gotten paid. The main excuse was that it was his partner's doing, totally abdicating his responsibilities.

One day, Ted was talking to his ex-partner on the phone. He asked again about the compensation, and the normal litany of feeble and ridiculous excuses were uttered again. Suddenly, Ted came to an important Realization. He was never going to receive the money owed, or receive any kind of an apology. He immediately thought that thinking about any of this ever again would be a colossal waste of time and energy. He had far better things to be doing! It helped him to **move on** from all the bitterness and resentments he'd been feeling up until that point. The other thing he did was to place ALL of what happened into the hands of God. Ted realized that God will judge, and atone, and make amends for all wrongdoing. He will hold everyone accountable. This helped him to move ahead from all the unpleasantness of being cheated and betrayed.

We have trouble evaluating the heavy burden of carrying the GRUB. This affects us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In Spanish it's called NO BUENO--- it's just no good for us at any level.

Example behavior: Molly was abused sexually as a young teenager. She has had trouble moving on from all the ravages of the painful events which occurred decades ago. She has a number of physical ailments, which linger to this very day. There may be a connection to healing the past, and improving herself physically. Many studies have proven the benefits of true forgiveness in improving ALL aspects of our lives.

- **We drink the poison, and hope the other person dies!** Who is suffering here? In every case I'm aware of, the injurers knew not what they were doing. They are not even remotely in touch with what they



did to harm us. They are not suffering at all. By hanging on to all this old stuff, we are the ones who suffer.

- We remain **too distracted by past harmful people and events**. In so doing, we may not be fully living in the here and now. We are not fully PRESENT now. We need to come to say:
 - I've **moved on** from all that has happened.
 - I've been **set free** by Jesus. Our Lord has provided healing.
 - I've been **delivered from any bondage** to the past, or former enemies. In the name of Jesus, I have rebuked and removed all influences of evil as related to any lack of forgiveness at others or myself.
- We might still be steeped in **Guilt, Shame, or Regrets** from our own actions which have contributed to problem relationships with others. We do need to repent of our own wrongdoing and realize we are forgiven for all that we have done. Let's allow ourselves to be forgiven. Jesus has already anointed us with forgiveness!
- **We need to live in sober honesty regarding our own antics and behaviors**. If we still carry a chip around, or are dour, offensive, angry, moody or cantankerous with others around us--- these may be indicators that our past relationships are not reconciled. If we fly off the handle easily, this also be another indicator of work we need to do.
- **The GRUB does not just go away on its own**. We can deny it, or hope it goes away, pretend it does not exist, or just bury it deep in our souls--- HOWEVER---these do-not work . We need to "enter the Healing Room" to proactively ask for the help of Jesus and His Holy Spirit to assist us to be set free.
- **The devil WILL attempt to dredge up the past** making us wonder or doubt whether we've forgiven anyone. Jesus HAS set us free. Remember to "put on the Armor of God" in Ephesians 6:10-20 and to REBUKE the devil in James 4:7-10...



Why should we forgive others, or ourselves, for past behaviors, or words, which hurt us?

Jesus and the Scriptures all point to forgiving others and ourselves. Showing grace and forgiveness is exactly what God wants us to do.

- **Forgiving is just good for us mentally, physically, spiritually...** If we don't forgive, the alternatives are bitterness or resentment, which are the unhealthiest emotions there are. (See Hebrews 12:15).
- **When we forgive, we are Set Free.** We can more fully be devoted to God's work, here and now. We are no longer distracted by what happened in the past.
- When we forgive, we are **delivered from bondage**. The devil loves for us to dwell in bondage. Demons do not want us forgiving. They want to haunt us with self-pity, anger, hurts and blame etc. In forgiveness, we BREAK this bondage! All that delivered rage leaves us more at peace.
- **We get to participate in Our Lord's supernatural graces.** Imagine moving from hatreds and judgments of others, to PRAYING for that person. This is God at work.
- Learning how to forgive enables us to practice forgiveness so much that it becomes our second nature-- an automatic response to offenses which come our way. We become **Automatic Forgivers!**
- **We grow closer to Jesus**, as He helps us in forgiving others, or ourselves. God has been so gracious with us. We have not gotten what we deserve either.
- We **increase** in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control--- all fruits of His Holy Spirit.
- The **bad habits** we developed while in the pain of GRUB (grudges, resentments, unforgiveness and bitterness) come to screeching halt--- no longer needing to douse our pain with alcohol, drugs, over-eating, or a myriad of other activities not pleasing to our Lord.
- **No longer distracted** by what has happened in our past lives--- not looking back over our shoulder at unresolved relationships. They are now complete, over, done, finished.
- **No longer subject to self-pity and woe-is-me attitudes**, or entitlements, or needing to control everything and everybody around us. We are now free--- like having been released from prison.



What Prevents us from Wanting to Forgive?

Hurt was profound and created damage in us! We are in shock over what happened. It came quickly upon us, and out of left field. Where did this come from? We sure didn't deserve this kind of treatment.

- **We want revenge.** We want to get this person---if it's the last thing we do! No one does this to me. Who do they think they are in treating me this way? We are NOT thinking about the Gospel call of loving enemies, or turning the other cheek.
- **We bury the GRUB deep inside**---thinking it will all just go away. We might build walls of protection around ourselves to ward off future harm. We may be in denial about the depth of our hurt. We all need to come to terms with these emotions. All the RAGE inside of us will find its way out, or make us depressed IF we bury it deep inside of us.

Reconcile? Resolution? Finding Closure?

- What would we say to our offenders?
- Is it all too raw to deal with? Still too much anger?
- Hostility/defensiveness from the person with whom we are trying to reconcile?
- Don't even want to see or be around the people who hurt us?
- Cannot imagine good outcomes?
- Could we say "...I owe you an apology, would you forgive me?"
- Meeting in person is ideal--but a phone call can work too.
- What if the Harmers are deceased? Now what?
- Can we learn to forgive from afar---through Prayer and contemplation, and the help of the Holy Spirit?
- **We keep re-playing our grievance story,** but refuse to do anything to try to achieve resolution. We keep re-hashing and dredging up the story. In our minds, this is not over yet.
- **We keep beating ourselves up mercilessly**---over our own actions, words, and behaviors which contributed to the problems in the relationship. We may be stuck in guilt, shame and regrets over the past. How could we have been so stupid? What was I thinking? We need to Repent of past sins and move on. Jesus has forgiven us.
- **Comfort Zone?** Not dealing with GRUB provides a false notion of control? We might say...I am used to life this way, and don't really know how to move on, so I will remain stuck right here. Do we realize we are trapped, are destroying our own well-being, and are robbed of all joy? Meanwhile we can remain moody, bothered, rude, angry and even offensive around others.



- **Victim Mode with self-pity?** Our internal question is...don't you know what happened to me? Want to feel sorry for me? This is very much in the way of forgiving!
- Our self-talk might be...FORGIVE? **Not on my watch...I will never forgive...** I will always hate this person---and that will not change!
- **Why me mode?** We are steeped in righteous indignation--like the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. Injustices and unfairness have been heaped upon me. I have been singled out somehow! What did I do to deserve this treatment---these harsh words from others?
- **Do we know ourselves well?** Are we automatic Forgiver's or do we take things in too personally? Are we naturally inclined to forgive others easily, recognizing that we all stand to be humiliated, ignored, overlooked or spoken to harshly? We all meet prime time jerks in this life who cause hurt and harm! Can we get better at recognizing when relationships are not working, and just let them go?
- **Unrealistic expectations?** We wait and demand an apology or restitution for \$ owed to us, and we WAIT to forgive until these happen? We could be waiting a very long time!
- **First move?** We wait for offenders to reach out to us, to open a dialogue for reconciliation. We should be the first responders---attempting to find ways to resolve issues...settle with our adversaries on the way to court"--as stated in the Scriptures. Will we allow our pride get in the way of doing the very thing which could set us free?
- **"Blame God" syndrome?** How could God have allowed all this to happen to me? It's His fault? God did not cause others to sin! He IS aware of all that happened, and will hold all of us accountable for our lives. The sins of others, or our own have caused the issues with forgiving---Not God!
- **Mistaken understanding of what forgiveness really is...**It does NOT mean we've forgotten what happened, nor does it mean a friendship will be restored. It does mean that we have turned the other cheek, borne wrongs patiently and are no longer bothered by what others have done to us. We have moved on with life.



Part Four Reflections

Tools & Resources: What do we do Now?

Seeking Resolutions... How do we go about Forgiving?

1. Begin with Prayer and Journaling. We must ask God to assist us with a desire to forgive. We must also follow through on what He asks us to do. Our Lord will speak to us personally about next steps. Writing down notes(in my view) enables us to process the hurts and pain of failed relationships. Our Lord is a wonderful Encourager in the process of forgiving.
2. Write a **vent letter** to the people who harmed us. Detail what happened, including all the feelings and emotions. Be specific and let-it-fly. Pour it all out on the paper or the computer screen. Quietly review all of it, however, don't send it to anyone. It's just for us! (See the Vent Letter Plus information on pp.36-38). I've received great benefit from this every time I use it.
3. If possible, meet with the person, or people, who harmed you to try to **reconcile**. Attempt to have a civil conversation, spelling out exactly what happened from your perspective. In some cases, the other person may offer an apology. Be willing to offer one yourself. The idea here is to reconcile the relationship, and to attempt to resolve our differences. Praying about this meeting in advance will really help us to stay calm, no matter what is said. In some cases, this kind of meeting will be impossible. The other person is deceased, or the person with whom we are having trouble is or will be totally defensive and even hostile. Again, be prayed up first, and ask Our Lord for His healing graces to assist us.
4. **Recognize Incompatibility**. In my own life, there are a few harmers with whom I DO NOT want to have a relationship. This is perfectly OK. We're just not going to get along with everyone. A few of these relationships are just toxic, and it's better for me to **forgive from afar**, and stay away from certain people.
5. **Form a relationship with a Christian mentor** who has experience with forgiveness issues. This person could be a member of the clergy, but does not have to be. Talking all this out with a trusted mentor is great therapy. They can Pray with us in the forgiveness process. Another person who has dealt with forgiveness issues already can be extremely helpful. They can show us the ropes, encourage us, and hold our feet to the fire in love.
6. **Read Books on forgiveness**. One is **Forgive for Good**, by Dr. Fred Luskin. Another is **Sacred Fire** by Ronald Rolheiser, who speaks about the importance of forgiveness in this excellent book. Another



good book on forgiveness and healing is **Forgiveness is a Choice** by Robert Enright. Another is **Let it Go** by T.D. Jakes. I recommend the Workbook version. Another is **Unbound** by Neal Lozano. All these books are available on Amazon.com.

7. **Do a Scripture study on the word forgiveness.** Look up every Scripture you can find on this topic, study the verses, and ask Our Lord what He is trying to teach us with these specific words. How does this scripture apply to me, to my situation? This technique has been of tremendous help in my own journey in forgiveness. (Please see pp.16-20 for several Scriptures which may be helpful.) **The single most effective forgiveness Scripture to me has been Colossians 3:12-15. I encourage you to study this one closely!**

8. **Expel the evil one** from all thoughts regarding the people who have harmed us. A good prayer could begin... “In the name of Jesus, I pray that you expel, rebuke, and remove all evil influences attacking me now. Please remove all demons (like anger or hatreds or judgments) or anything that is not of Your Perfect Will and Design for me. Amen! The single best book I’ve found on rebuking the evil one is **Unbound**, by Neal Lozano.

9. **Move past any guilt, shame or regrets** from our own actions or words which may have contributed to the harm we received. Realize that Jesus has forgiven us, and we need to forgive ourselves too. We might look back and think...” how could I have been so stupid?” Well, God has forgiven us. We need to move on from our past lives. For good solace and insights, check out Matthew 11:28-30.

10. **Enter the Healing Room.** This means we really do need to grapple with everything that happened to cause us harm. Getting all the ugliness of our past lives in front of us can be very therapeutic. We may realize (as I have) that I made a much bigger deal out of certain words and actions of others, than were necessary. Or, we may realize that we took certain things way too personally. We might be a bit too thin-skinned. Also, the forgiveness process takes time. It’s a journey. Miraculous forgiveness experiences do happen, however, I believe most forgiveness happens gradually over time. We just need to get started.

11. **The Eyes of Christ Process**
 - See other people through the Eyes of Christ. Can we see others (especially offenders) as Jesus sees them?
 - Judge not! It’s not our job to judge. Let God do the judging. God will hold us all accountable. (See Matthew 7:1-5)
 - Take the log out of our own eye. We are not perfect either. We are ALL sinners! (See Matthew 7:1-5)



- Forgive, forgive, forgive... how many times? 7x70. Let us also realize that we are NOT doormats for continued bad behaviors. Offender's need to be held accountable as well. (See Matthew 18:21-22)
- Become a Prayer Commando... Intercede and Pray for our harmers. (The power and grace Our Lord can transform our hearts and minds. Jesus can inspire us to move from hatred and judgments of others, to praying for them!)
- Colossians 3:12-15..." clothe ourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you.

12. Study the Spiritual works of Mercy of the Catholic Church

Admonish sinners

Forgive the selfish

Counsel the doubtful

Instruct the ignorant

Bear wrongs patiently

Comfort the afflicted

Pray for the living and the dead

13. We do need to **forgive ourselves** too. We all make mistakes. We are human. We say or do the wrong things at times. We can relentlessly beat ourselves up even years after incidents where we just blew it. We do need to confess our wrongdoing. Our Lord Jesus has His loving arms outstretched to us saying: **"My son/daughter, your sins are forgiven!"** Let's allow ourselves to accept His forgiveness, and let's allow ourselves to move on from the past.

14. **Rely on the healing power of the Scriptures:** One example is in Ezekiel 36:25--27, which talks about gaining a new heart, not a stony stubborn heart. We need a softer heart to forgive others and ourselves.

15. **Stuff a sock:** In the Healing Room, the holes in the Wall of Prayer and Confession represent every sin and bad feeling we have about others while harboring unforgiveness. They include hatreds, rage, judgments, condemnation, bitterness, resentments--- ALL the bad things which happen to us while not forgiving. Imagine that you stuff every hole with an old stained and soiled sock, which represent every unforgiveness sin we have committed. The moment we stuff the sock into the hole, its sucked off into oblivion. It's gone, if we allow it to be gone. Jesus provides His supernatural Graces and Power, to send these socks off into space, and never to return pPlease see the reflection on Entering the Healing Room in this website).

16. We must **transform our mindset** in forgiving. We need to:

- Not expect an apology, or any admission of wrongdoing
- Not expect to receive \$ owed to us
- Not allow the devil to dredge up or rehash the past because a certain person's name is mentioned. We've already been set free by Jesus. We cannot allow ourselves to get dragged back down into the muck and the mire.



- Not vow to “exact revenge” or retaliate on our terms.
- Move past a woe-is-me attitude, or entitlements, or a desire to control everything and everyone around us.

- Remember how much we have already been forgiven ourselves.** See Ephesians 4:32, or Matthew 6:14-15. We are just as big a sinner as the person who harmed us. See Matthew 7:1-5 on “taking the speck (log) out of our own eye”.
- Tears are Great.** Tears may indeed be a key for us in releasing all the poisons we have been harboring. The work of forgiving others is one the most difficult things we could ever do, however, among the most beneficial to us personally. Being set free is tremendously freeing, a bit like being released from a long prison sentence. (Please see the Lady of Mount Carmel story at the end of this workbook)
- Be open to be prayed with in the Holy Spirit.** Find mature Christians to Pray over/with you to remove all strongholds or bondage which may be preventing you from forgiving others, or yourself. We need to renounce and rebuke the presence of evil, which may be stopping us from forgiving. Tears are a good indication of our willingness to release all the ravages of not forgiving. Be OPEN to the Blessings our Lord has in store for us by being set free.
- Examine two groups of people in our lives--- the Encouragers and the Well-Poisoners.** This first group may have been parents, teachers, coaches, friends, or anyone who supported us and only saw the best in us. They exuded the love of Jesus! The other group--- the well-poisoners, were often negative, critical, vicious, nasty or just hard to be around. Their antics were bothersome and perhaps arrogant and often selfish. They could be enemies. Now compare these two groups. When I first thought about these Encouragers, I quickly came up with a list well over 30 people. In the latter group, I could only think of 5. Now who do we think more about? Let us all agree to FORGIVE our well-poisoners, and be very grateful for all the Encouragers who have come our way. (Please see the **Welcome to the Healing Room** reflection in this website.)
- Good reminders from 2 good books on forgiveness:**
 - From Robert Enright’s book called Forgiveness is a Choice: **“Freedom comes with a price. That price includes courageously confronting our anger, being able to label someone’s behavior as wrong, humbly accepting that someone hurt us deeply, and working on changing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the person who does not necessarily deserve all this. With time, our work and the support of others can begin to bear fruit. We can feel freer and even more mature.”**



- From TD Jakes' book called Let-it-Go: **"The process of forgiveness remains an ongoing work of art that we must continue to cultivate and exercise if we are to be the vibrant, creative, balanced, effective human beings we were made to be."**



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Scriptures to Help Us Be Healed

Over many years, I've really benefited a lot of studying God's Word as it relates to forgiveness. These "words from God" can provide us healing, insights, wisdom and encouragements. They can change our hearts and minds. They can also challenge us to do things we really don't want to do.

Our Lord wants to provide us ALL the tools we need to be set free and unburdened by the many ravages of harboring the ugliness of nursed grudges, held resentments or the harboring of bitterness. Please look at these closely and see how they apply to your life and your situation.

Go-To Scriptures

1. **Colossians 3:12-15**... a consummate set of words on forgiveness which encourage us on exactly what to do in living our Christian lives. The key words here are: **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**
2. **Ephesians 4:31-32**... **Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you.**
3. **John 8:1-11**... This is the story of the woman condemned to die by stoning for adultery... a key verse is: **Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.** These verses are worth reading closely.
4. **Romans 12:17-21**... Another wonderful set of verses here to remind us about NOT repaying evil for evil, and to live at peace with everyone (Hard to do!) It also reminds us to NOT take revenge but **leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: I will repay, says the Lord. Do not overcome evil with evil, by overcome with good.**
5. **Matthew 18:21-22**... The conversation Peter is having with Jesus about how many times he should forgive--- up to seven times? Jesus answers... **I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.** We can offer unconditional and unlimited forgiveness to others, providing that we have not become a doormat for others continued bad behavior.



6. **Ephesians 6:10-20**... Important Scriptures about **putting on the Armor of God**--- to repel the attacks of the evil one. These verses offer important insights in what to do in rebuking the tactics of the devil--- who does not want forgiving anyone.
7. **Matthew 7:1-5**... Key words here are: **Do not judge, or you too will be judged**. It sure is easy to judge others who harmed us. Jesus reminds us to: first take the plank out of our own eyes, then we'll see clearly about removing the speck from our brother's eyes.
8. **Matthew 6:14-15**...key words here: **But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins**. (Tough words to follow and live-by.)
9. **Ezekiel 36:25-27**...key words here: **I will (God will) give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh**. We can be awfully hard-hearted in resistance and reluctance to forgiving others. Changing our hearts is a big deal.
10. **Matthew 5:38-42**... key points here are around NOT responding with an eye for eye or tooth for tooth mindset. Instead, Jesus calls us to turn- the-other-cheek. Our humanness would compel us to retaliate, however, our call with His power is to let it go.
11. **Luke 11:4**... Part of the Lord's Prayer: **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us**.
12. **Deuteronomy 32:35**... Key words here: **It is mine to avenge; I will repay**. God knows what has happened to us, and will hold all parties accountable. We do not have to fret about others "getting what they deserve. We will all be held accountable in God's timing.
13. **2 Corinthians 5:17-18**... We are re-created beings in Christ when we are born again in Him. He desires to set-us-free from any shackles or bondage we may still be carrying around from our GRUB.
14. **James 2:13**... This is about MERCY... God cannot be merciful with us unless we have been merciful with others. Think about how much Mercy has been poured out on us.
15. **Luke 5:17-26**... Here our Lord Jesus heals the paralyzed man. The key words: **My friend, your sins are forgiven you**--- and so are we!



His Love is Amazing- No Matter What

1. Romans 8:31-39...Key words here: **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution of famine or nakedness or danger or sword?** (Or all the offensive words and behaviors of others?) **No, in all these things we are MORE than conquerors through him who loved us.** Nothing will be able to separate from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.
2. Ephesians 3:14-21... Key words here: **to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--- that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** It's good to remember Christ's love in the middle of our attempts to reconcile with others and to grow in love for the very people who harmed us.
3. Romans 5:3-5... **Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character; and character hope.**

The Evil One is Lurking

1. Peter 5:8-9...Key words here: **Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.** (The devil wants to "dredge up" the past, and deceive us into thinking that we cannot forgive anyone.)
2. 1 John 5:19.... Key words: **We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.**
3. 2 Timothy 3:13... Key words: **But evil people and imposters will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceive.** I sure remember being deceived a few times by people out to take advantage of me. As a result, I got hurt badly. These evil people will have their time before our Lord to account for their lives.
4. 1 John 3:7-10...Key words: **Anyone who does not live righteously (willing to forgive) and does not love other believers does not belong to God.** These are sure challenging words to us who have trouble forgiving.
5. Ephesians 6:11... Key words: **Put on the Armor of God so that we will be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil.**
6. Ephesians 6:16...Key words: **In addition to all these (verses 10 to 17), hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.**



7. **2 Timothy 2:23-26...** Many key encouragements like: **Not getting involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights.** (These verses are worth a deep study.)
8. **James 4:7...**Key words...**So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** Verses 7-10 here are full of good advice. We follow by seeing others through the eyes of Christ, not judging, not hating, not name- calling, and transforming our animosity and enmity into praying and interceding for the people who harmed us.

Our Love for Others is Required

1. **Romans 12: 9-12...** Key words...Loving others--- no matter what they have done to us. **Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.** Loving someone we used to hate requires the Supernatural power and grace of Jesus with us.
2. **Luke 7:47...**Key words...**But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.** Only those who fully comprehend the depth of their own sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness God offers to us. We need to pass on this forgiveness to others.
3. **John 4:11-23...** Worthy of deep study. **If someone says, "I love God", but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love the people we do see, how can we love God, whom we can't see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.**
4. **John 13:35...** Key words...**Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.** We might be saying... WHAT? Love someone who did me wrong in many profound ways? Are you kidding me? Not on my watch? Never forgive them?
5. **I Corinthians 13:4-6...** Key words about love, which we have heard many times at weddings...**love is patient, kind, not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Does not demand its own way. Not irritable, keeps no record of being wronged... endures through every circumstance.** Worthy of close examination, to see where we may be falling short.



About That Anger

1. **Matthew 5:21-24...** Key words: **But if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.** Anger is a great sin, because it violates God's command to love.
2. **Sirach 27:30 to 28:7** (Catholic Bibles)
3. **Ephesians 4:26-27 --Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.**

How Are We to Live?

1. **Philippians 4:6-9 --Pray about everything. Fix your thoughts on what is true, honorable right, pure, lovely and admirable. Think about things which are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting all these things into practice.**
2. **Psalm 19:14--** Prayer that our words and thoughts find FAVOR before God, Our Rock and Redeemer. That our lives are PLEASING to God.
3. **Galatians 5:22-23---** live the fruits of the Holy Spirit.
4. **Matthew 5:43-48---** Jesus' call to love our enemies.
5. **Matthew 5:1-11 --Sermon on the Mount---Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**
6. **Matthew 6: 16-17 --Fasting on behalf of our perpetrators.**
7. **Deuteronomy 30:19-20-- Choose life! "That you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to Him.**
8. **Hebrews 3:15 --Harden not your hearts.**
9. **Philippians 2:3-- In humility value others above yourselves.**



10. **1 John 2:7-14-- Love one another.**

11. **Ephesians 4:30—Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

12. **Galatians 6:10-- Do good to everyone!**

13. **Jeremiah 29:11-- God's plans for us---prosper us, not harm, gives us hope and a future.**

How NOT to Live

1. **Galatians 5: 19-20--** Acts of the flesh are obvious: hatred, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, factions...
2. **Ephesians 4:31-- Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well all types of evil behavior.**
3. **Matthew 5:38-42—Turn the other cheek, and do not seek revenge.** We need to avoid seeking revenge. Ghandi has said: "An eye for an makes the whole world blind."

Repent of Our Own Wrongdoing

1. **James 4: 7-10-- Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Grieve, mourn and wail... Humble ourselves before the Lord, and he will lift us up!**
2. **Psalm 32...** David confesses all his Sins in his affair with Bathsheba. He expresses the JOY of God's forgiving him for all his transgressions. He confesses and we also need to confess our sins in withholding forgiveness toward others.



3. **1 John 1:5-10...** More on confessing our sins of GRUB before God...**If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.**
4. **1 John 3:7-10...** Very worthy of close study... Looks at righteousness, our sins before God, the influence of the evil one, and loving one another.
5. **Mark 1:15—Repent and believe the Good News!**
6. **Psalm 51:1-7-- Blot out my transgressions--- wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**
7. **Isaiah 1:18--Though our sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.**

Key Scriptures to Remember

1. **Exodus 20:4-6 ---I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.**
2. **Hebrews 12:15 --we may be nursing a bitter root.**
3. **Luke 23:34--** They know not what they are doing. This can sure apply to many of the folks who have harmed us.
4. **Hebrews 1:1-4--** God is speaking to us through His Son Jesus.
5. **Romans 3:24--** Jesus declares that we are righteous.
6. **James 1:2-4--Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds... the testing of your faith produces perseverance.**
7. **Luke 5:17-25--** Jesus forgives and heals a paralyzed man. Jesus forgives us and will assist us in forgiving others as well.



In Our Times of Despair:

1. **Matthew 11:28-30**--- Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yolk upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
2. **Psalm 65:3**---When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.
3. **Galatians 1:3-5** ---Jesus rescues us from the present evil age.
4. **Isaiah 38:17**---Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all your sins behind your back.
5. **Colossians 1:13-14**---For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus' Helpful Reminders:

1. **Ephesians 1:7**--- In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us--- with all wisdom and understanding.
2. **Luke 7:47** ---Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--- as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.
3. **2 Timothy 2:23-26** ---Key verse here is: **And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind, able to teach, not resentful.**
4. **Luke 4:18** ---The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free. Since we are the hands and feet of Jesus, we can offer all these to others too—especially the folks we need to forgive.



Vent Letter Process

The other day a person mentioned hard feelings regarding an event (and a person) which happened a few years ago. It didn't sound like any resolutions or reconciliations have occurred yet. My friend was still very bothered, even agitated. It's still stuck in his craw. I suggested a five-step process that I believe our Lord provided to me. It has worked well anytime I've ever used it.

As a place to begin, I suggested a **vent letter**, where he could write down as many details of what happened as possible. I'm suggesting the following to be included:

- Who said or did what to cause an offense, damage, wounds, or hurt?
- What happened?
- Why were we so bothered by what happened?
- How did we react when it happened, and how are we feeling about it now?
- What were the specific character flaws detected in the other person?
- What were our expectations at the time?
- Getting all our **rage on the page** is important--- to get out in the open(unbury) all the negative or angry feelings we are experiencing, and redirecting them to the paper/journal in front of us.
- It's Ok to RANT here. Just let it fly! Write down anything which comes to mind.
- Write down one-word adjectives--- good, bad and ugly, e.g. smart, gifted speaker/writer/thinker, friendly, focused, diligent, gregarious etc. (Look for the good!) Also: arrogant, control freak, hypocrite, egomaniac, narcissist, cheater, betrayer, loud, blowhard, offensive, obnoxious, intense etc. (Not so good!)
- These are for US alone—or perhaps a few close friends. DO NOT SEND to the people who harmed us.

The overarching objective is to remember the people involved and what they did to harm us. This is designed to get all the bad stuff OFF our chests. I have found it helpful to get it all right in front of me to observe and contemplate. I ask Jesus to look at all of it with me. I found that in many cases, I over-reacted and made a mountain out of a molehill.

Our own mistakes:

- How did I contribute to the problems in this relationship?
- How did I fan the flame of dysfunction? Was I too angry, too intense, not listening, not understanding the true dynamics of the relationship? Did I engage in gossip and slander and judgments too easily?
- Were my expectations unrealistic?
- Did I trust someone else too much? Could I have checked out this person more in advance?
- Did I fail to get business agreements in writing--- just assuming a handshake would suffice?
- Did I force my way in to a relationship which was not really desired by the other party?
- Did I listen to the Holy Spirit when warned that a new relationship (and business connection) could be lots of trouble?
- Did I stubbornly attempt to convert a person to a spiritual life who expressed NO interest whatsoever, yet continued anyway?
- Have I confessed all my own errors, wrongdoing, and sins before God in these failed relationships?



- Did I engage in a battle for control with someone else, when a battle was totally unnecessary--- just to prove I was right, to get my way, or prove I was in charge?

What have we learned in the failed relationship?

Valuable lessons have been learned in the anguish of failed relationships:

- Who not to be...
- What not to do...
- Getting all business agreements in writing.
- Trusting Jesus, and being careful about trusting other humans.
- We do not always need to be in control.
- Harboring/nursing GRUB is just bad for us. It's bad for us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Nothing good comes from hanging on to old baggage.
- Seek first to understand others by listening and observing others first, before doing anything else. Discern situations and people **before judging**.
- Attempt to live the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) --- especially patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control.
- Look for the good in others, and build on that.
- Increase in mercy and compassion for others. (See James 2:13 and Matthew 5:7)
- Many people are in severe Pain themselves, and lash out at others. They often **know not what they are doing**. Instead of judging them, we can begin to Pray and Intercede that their pain becomes healed and reconciled.
- We are just going to be incompatible with some people. Their style, process, methods and focus are totally different than ours. All of this is ok. It's not a crime to be different than others, and we are not going to get along with everyone.
- We can become Automatic Forgivers with all the people we encounter. This requires **the Radical and Supernatural Graces and Power of Jesus and His Holy Spirit in our lives**.



Gratitude amid all the issues, can we be grateful?

- Grateful that Our Lord DID protect us and enabled us to survive very tough situations.
- The **school of hard knocks** can enable us to grow in wisdom, character, perseverance and humility.
- Devastating and hurtful relationships can enable us to GROW stronger in our relationship with God. He has been there with us every step of the way.
- The Lord has **empowered** us to move on and be set free from the ravages of held grudges, resentments, bitterness and non-forgiveness.
- We've seen the worst in others, which may have reminded us of ourselves at our worst. As a result, we can make changes in ourselves--- for the better.
- We're reminded of specific tools and resources provided to us which have set us free now, and enable us to revisit these when new issues arise.
- Upon being SET FREE, our well-being inf life and joy have returned. We are Restored in Jesus. We have been healed.

Opportunities now? What might Our Lord be asking us to do?

- Become Prayer Commando's (Intercede with God) on behalf of the very people who rendered harm to us.
- Do our best to **reconcile** with problem relationships from our past lives.
- Realize the many devastations we direct inward to ourselves by nursing and harboring the GRUB. Carrying all this stuff around is just awful for us at every level.
- Decide that we need to forgive others, and do so as soon as possible.
- Repent of our own actions, words and deeds which have contributed to the problems with others. Bask in gladness for the love and forgiveness that Jesus has poured out on us. The past is gone.



Words of Freedom in Forgiveness

Over the years of studying forgiveness in my own life, and in the lives of others, I've meditated on all the words below at one time or another. The bottom line is that we are becoming Set Free from the many ugly ravages of unforgiveness.

Remove	Untie
Kick-out	Loosen
Free-up	Shake dust from feet
Be set free (in Jesus)	Redeem (make holy)
Delivered from Bondage	Expiate
Expel	Atone
Reject	Reparations
Correct	Reconcile
Rebuke	Resolve
Admonish	Move-on
Free to leave	Released
Delete	Restored
Obliterate	Drop-the-bag-of-rocks
Efface	Empty
Destroy	Exorcise
Eliminate	Expunge
Get rid of...	Go!



What's it like to be set free? How does it feel to us?

1. It's like we just got released from prison. We walk outside into a warm day with fresh clean air. We say... "whew-- I'm really glad that's over!" We feel relaxed, peaceful and joyful. Heavy burdens have been lifted from us. We say... "thank you Jesus!"
2. Fights? Rancor? Judgments? Bitterness? Anger? These are no longer a part of our thinking. We say..." all that bad stuff is over; that was then, and this is now."
3. No longer a need to numb our pain in overeating, booze, drugs, or any other obsessive behaviors. We become FREE of addictions and compulsions.
4. We are very surprised that we can PRAY and intercede for our offenders. Former hatreds and judgments are transformed into genuine concern and compassion for the very people who hurt us. This is God's Amazing Grace at work. (See the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-12)
5. We become automatic forgivers. From the hard work in forgiving, we are granted more grace and power (through Jesus), to not find faults in others continually--- only looking for the best in others.
6. When we are tempted to dredge up or rehash prior hurts, we immediately come against the tactics of the devil, and rebuke his nasty reminders. We command the evil one to leave in the name of Jesus.
7. Forgiving others does NOT mean we have forgotten what happened. It does not mean either that we'll become friends again with the harmers. It does mean that we have reconciled and resolved what happened in our own minds, and are no longer bothered or burdened. We are free!
8. As an offender's name pops up, we no longer experience rage, heartache, agitation, frustration, or exasperation. We realize the wisdom of just letting things go.
9. We recognize why others did what they did to us. In understanding more, we realize that others were in tremendous pain themselves, and we became the unfortunate recipients of their lashing out, just to deal with their own pain.
10. We become grateful for what has happened. All the pain and anguish of our forgiveness journey has taught us tremendous life lessons, which provide us real depth as a human being. We've become a better person, a far more forgiving person. We can teach others about forgiveness, and we can emulate Our Lord Jesus in loving our enemies. (See Matthew 5:43-48)



Forgiveness At Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Even though I was a Christian person, I was regularly grouchy or even defensive, especially with my wonderful wife Ginny. What I did not really know was how ANGRY I was with my Dad. He had died in November of 1985.

Unresolved anger will find a way to get expressed, and I sure found ways to express it, especially with my family. As you will see in this story, that anger found expression in public as well. The following story is one I still recall a lot, even 30+ years later. It's a powerful story of forgiveness, which has helped me tremendously in my own journey.

In March of 1988, I was playing in a recreation league basketball game with Bob Mulhern (the fellow who introduced me to CIC) at El Toro High School in Lake Forest, California. Bob was an outstanding player and went in for a lay-up on a drive to the basket. In my view, he was fouled hard, but no foul was called. I was watching this from a few feet away on the court and was incredulous and angry about no foul being called.

The other team's point guard was a small fellow. I remember taking a swipe at his head as he took the ball out of bounds to head to the other team's basket. I was incensed from the non-call on the previous play and felt I needed to take it out on someone. The referee who I yelled at for the non-call suggested I take a seat on the sidelines to cool-off for a while.

After the game and reflecting on my **not-so-Christian** behavior, I wondered what it was about this incident on the basketball court had made me so angry. A few days later I was speaking to John Mooney, one of the founders of CIC. At this time, I was speaking to John regularly. I explained to John what had happened on the basketball court. He suggested to me that I had a rebellious spirit. I recall saying to him, "oh yeah"? John calmly suggested I go visit a friend and colleague of his, Byron Clarke, who lived in Tempe, Arizona. Byron had a ministry call the **Healing of Memories**. John believed I could benefit from visiting with Byron.

At the time I had a potential business opportunity in the Phoenix area, so I arranged to visit the prospect in Phoenix and Byron on the same one-day trip. I do not have much recollection of the prospect meeting, but I did spend about an hour with Byron Clarke that day. He asked me lots of questions about my past, my family and about my life. He suggested I come back the following week and spend two days with him, to dig into this healing of memories. I still didn't know what I was getting myself into. But I trusted John Mooney and knew there would be good outcomes from the visit, so I proceeded early the next week to Phoenix on blind faith.

On the appointed day, I met with Byron. In the large room where we met for our sessions, there were three comfortable chairs. He and I sat in two of them. He then turned to me and said, "Guess who is sitting in this empty chair?" He said, "Jesus is with us in this chair. He is here!"

Byron began to ask me questions about my earliest recollections of childhood. He asked about specific incidences, who was there, the environment and who said or did what to whom. This process of dredging up old memories was hard work for me. I suppose I'd done a pretty good job of burying the past and locking these memories deep inside of me. I remember a common theme (problem) from my childhood was regular conflicts and fights with my mother and not being supported (abandoned) by my father.

As the first day concluded, I found myself in a state of frustration, confusion, and exhaustion. All this work to remember things from childhood wore me out and I recall wondering what good all this might be doing. Byron suggested I attend Mass at a local Catholic church, called Our Lady of Mount Carmel not too far from the place where Byron and I were



meeting. I attended the Mass, but was in an agitated state from all the goings on and remembrances from childhood. Fortunately, that night I was able to relax a bit with a good friend who lived in Phoenix. We dined on some good Mexican food and I remember quaffing a few excellent beers to accompany the meal and good fellowship.

Byron suggested I attend Mass before our session on day #2. I went back to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church for an early morning Mass. After a restful evening, I came to church energized and ready to tackle the work of the day. My sense from all the discussions on day #1 got centered around the concept of **forgiveness**. It became clear that I needed to forgive my earthly father, Gordon Aitkens, for abandoning me to his alcoholism and unavailability, and not backing me up with my mom, Margaret Aitkens. Too frequently, I got forced into a role of standing up to my mother. I learned in this process that I was angry with my Dad. He had died in 1985, so it was going to be impossible to reconcile with him in person.

At the Mass on day #2, I noticed a huge Crucifix of Jesus hanging from the ceiling. I pondered the Crucifix during the Mass. I was praying about God's desires for me in the sessions with Byron. Suddenly, I felt I got a **word from God** which said, "You are going to have to cry." It occurred to me that I had not cried about anything or anyone in years, but crying to abide in God's desires, I was very open to. It became my desire to leave this day having forgiven my earthly father, no matter what it took. I recall feeling as though I had suffered long enough with all this anger at my Dad, who I loved intensely. (My dad had died a few years before.)

I left the church and headed to the session with Byron, armed with this word about having to cry, not fully knowing what it meant.

Byron asked me more questions about my father. I was having difficulty forgiving my dad for his alcoholism and his abandoning me as a child, and thrusting me into an adult role to continually fight with his wife and my mother.

At about 12pm Byron said "there is nothing more I can do to help you. You are just going to need to pray." He then said, "I need to go take care of a few things; I'll be back in a few minutes." Since I was so resolved to leaving that place having forgiven my parents (especially my Dad), I took Byron's advice to just pray. It occurred to me to go over to a corner of the large room and get on my knees to pray--- now begging Jesus to assist me with this process of forgiveness.

For the longest time, probably 15 or 20 minutes, I could not and did not focus on anything. This time seemed empty and without result. In thinking about this inability to focus later, I concluded that it was an all-out attack of Satan, who knew I was close to forgiving but launched one last powerful attack to prevent God's loving work to be done. Suddenly, a vision came to me which I will never forget. My parents (both) and I were embracing. The three of us were enveloped by a soft, clear, amber-colored kind of cloak. The covering was softer, you could see through it, and the three of us were hugging.

I first found this vision to be rather astounding, because I can assure you that no one at our home growing up ever hugged or embraced. More of my remembrances were characterized by harsh, angry words, slammed doors and no one ever saying they were sorry for anything said or done.

Seeing the three of us embracing sure came out of nowhere; it was a total surprise to me. The vision of the three of us embracing somehow provided me the permission I needed to forgive my Dad. Amazingly, Byron reappeared and asked me how I was doing. He asked me a few more questions, and five minutes later I was crying like I hadn't cried in years. I was crying like a baby, but the tears were more of a release from the many years of pent up anger and bitterness I had



held against my own father. These were the tears of healing and forgiveness. These were the tears prompted by Jesus when He said to me at the church that, “I would need to cry.”

Byron and I spent a few minutes speaking of forgiving my Mother. But the major healing (with my Dad) had been accomplished. The process of forgiveness for my mother happened quickly.

In the 30+ years or so since this wonderful healing occurred, I’ve thought about my parents many times. I came to realize that they had both come from miserable alcoholic families themselves. They did the best they could with what they knew. Neither had parents who you would describe as good role models. Suddenly, it was possible to forgive and forget the bad stuff perpetrated on me and come back to the fact that they did the best they could, with compassion. I’ve also noticed that since this profound healing occurred, I find it difficult to think or say bad things about them anymore. And even when describing some events which happened that I’m sure they weren’t proud of, I can describe them soberly without anger or judgments. They did the best they could.

From time to time, I wondered about the vision I’d had with my parents and me embracing. I was led to wonder about the color of the covering which enveloped the three of us. Why amber in color? Why not green or red or even white? About seven years after the vision, I happened to be at Mass in Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Several of us had just complete the CIC Bicycle Prayer Tour in September of 1995, and were in this church to celebrate and thank our Lord for His protection for all the riders who had participated in this bicycle ride, which took several of our riders across the entire country.

The Crucifix of Jesus was still hanging from the ceiling. I admired it as I had seven years before. Suddenly, it occurred to me that the predominant color of the Crucifix of Jesus was amber, the same exact color of the sheath of protection and love enveloping my parents and me in the vision. We believe in and follow a wonderful healer (Jesus) who loves us and wants only the best for us. Since the vision, amber has become one of my favorite colors.

