

Announcer 0:03

Welcome to transformed by the word, a podcast about discovering how to live your life with gratifying purpose. God created you for a reason and the Bible contains the keys to unlock your transformed life. Now, here's your host, Debora Barr

Debora 0:20

Thanks for joining me for episode nine of transformed by the word

Today we are exploring the topic. Why should I forgive? forgiveness is one thing that we all want when we've done something wrong. But it is very difficult to extend to others when we have been hurt. Holding on to unforgiveness. Refusing to forgive someone who has hurt you can be dangerous to your health. It becomes like a cancer that eats away at us from the inside. Studies show that holding on to unforgiveness affects our immune systems, and can lead to chronic pain, heart disease, and cancer. Unforgiveness also affects the emotional wellbeing of people. A spirit of unforgiveness allows bitterness to take root deep in our spirits, producing a stronghold of unforgiveness that is hard to break free from.

Those are just the physical and emotional dangers associated with unforgiveness. There's also a very dangerous spiritual harm that comes from holding on to unforgiveness. Jesus said, If you forgive people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive their trespasses, neither will the Father forgive your trespasses. I definitely want God to forgive me when I sin, so I have to forgive others.

Debora 2:08

Today, I've invited a special guest to the show. Her name is Margaret Walker, and I met Margaret nearly 20 years ago in a woman's Bible study, and I have been blessed by her in so many different ways. Margaret has been married to her husband Terry, for 39 years. They met just two weeks after Margaret's mother was murdered by her stepfather, leaving eight children all under the age of 21 without parents. Margaret found herself thrust into the responsibility for her four siblings. under the age of 18. Terry, a courageous man took on the responsibility with Margaret and they married eight months after they met. Margaret's biological father died when she was just nine years old.

Terry and Margaret had one child together, Terry Lee Walker Jr. She returned to school and graduated from West Virginia University when her son was small. Then once again tragedy hit Margaret and Terry's only child was killed by an impaired driver on cocaine in 2002. Since that tragic event caused by a repeat offender who had abused drugs and alcohol, Margaret joined mad, which stands for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Through this organization, she has spoken to hundreds of thousands of people to encourage safe driving and forgiveness of the offender for many years.

They have an endowment scholarship with Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation in memory of their son and give away hundreds of Bibles and thousands of dollars to recipients in the neighboring six high schools in the panhandle of West Virginia.

Margaret loves her family, especially her 40 plus nieces and nephews. She has lost count. However, the family is close and works hard at staying together throughout hard times and good times. And she loves to travel to Florida with her husband to break away from her day to day work.

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Stay tuned. We will be back in just a moment.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora 5:19

So Margaret, thank you so much for coming on the show today to share with our listening audience. It is always such a blessing to connect with you.

Margaret 5:29

It's nice meeting with you to Deb. It's been a while since we've chatted. So has been it's been too long. But yeah, today, thank you for the invite.

Debora

Today, we're discussing the topic of forgiveness. Specifically, in this episode, we're talking about forgiving people who have hurt us. And when I first learned some parts of your life story years ago, I learned a lot about the capacity of people to forgive, especially the capacity for Christians to forgive in the way that Jesus forgives us. Would you share with us a bit of your background, especially as it relates to forgiveness?

Margare 6:18

To go back, takes me back, way back because at 61 years old, now, I've got to take you back as far as when I was a child at nine years old. And nine years old, my father passed away, leaving my mom with six children. And I'm the oldest of those six, she remarried, she quickly remarried within a very short short time. And she married a man who was very abusive. Unlike my father, he was abusive, and eventually killed my mom, he murdered my mom. But in those years, when I was young, I had to watch him abuse, and made us as children do things that were at the time, I didn't understand, we were destroying my father's memory. But I didn't understand that at as I was young.

Margaret 7:20

But then, like I said, these were things that were done way before the murder, because she was murdered when I was 21. But I had held in as a young, young child hatred that a child shouldn't have. And when you are very young, and you have these emotions that you don't even know what to do with, um, you become destructive. And it's hurtful for children, not knowing what to do with these emotions. And I was very angry, and I would lash out, and God in His grace. When I was 17. I forgave my stepdad. Now, this was a couple of years before the murder. So I had experienced God's grace early early on, and I thank God for that. I don't know where I'd be today.

Debora

Well, I can't even imagine as a child having the capacity to forgive such hurtful things

Margaret 8:30

I don't, I think it was because I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior at 17. And I don't know, I don't even know how to answer that. Except that it was his grace. Immediately. Um, God took that anger away from me when I received him as my Lord and Savior. Now, I didn't ask God to do that. It just happened.

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Well, the hatred was so deep. And when I say hatred, it was so deep it hurts me to even talk about it because I was so young, and I was lashing out as a child and getting in trouble. And I carried this anger and the anger did not leave me. I want to say that I forgave my stepfather, but the anger never left me. Well, it left me. But it says it's in stages. So at 21 I'm the oldest of eight siblings, and my stepfather murdered my mom. And I had to take on the responsibility of, of raising my siblings. They were all under 21. Well, not off. Yes, all of them were under 21. But I had four siblings that were under 18 had I not taken on that responsibility for them, they would have ended up as ward's of the state. So therefore, I have lost my childhood and my youth in my 20s. And I have no regrets. However, the murder brought up all that, again, if you know what I'm saying. So now now I'm forgiving him for the ultimate. But God's in his grace allowed me to forgive.

Margaret 10:27

That is a choice. It's a choice you make. And it's not an easy one. But it's asking God to help you. And you have to be a willing participant with God, when it comes to forgiveness. And forgiveness is in layers. It's not I can't say everything became good. Like I said, I was angry. Even though I forgave my stepdad I was still angry, I had to deal with the anger later on in my life. And I did that. So that's an important concept. Forgiveness is not forgetting you can't forget the hurt that has happened to you. But forgiveness, like you said, is a choice. And you, we have to choose to forgive.

Debora 11:13

And I know your siblings. were hurt just as bad as you were, did any of them hold on to unforgiveness? And what were the effects of that in their lives?

Margaret

Well, being that there were eight of us some other dynamics to the story is that my mother was murdered on my sister's birthday. So the anniversary of that is October, the 26th. My sister has forgiven my stepdad also, as a matter of fact, all eight of us have forgiven him. It has taken it has taken years, I have one brother, that he swore he swore he would never forgive, and he wouldn't even talk to us. When we were young, he said, Don't even talk to me about it, I'm gonna go to hell, I'd rather go to hell and to forgive.

And I reminded my brother that the Lord had told me that all of us would forgive and, and so like I said, we're talking 15 years ago, my brother, finally, by the grace of God, he has forgiven my stepfather for murdering our mother. Because it Listen, it changed our lives entirely. Everything you know, to be as comfortable as it could have been having a mom was taken away from us, even though our lives were very, very troubled with her with him, you know what I'm saying? Because he was abusive. So it was, it was very challenging, but I'd rather have a mom with challenges than to not have a mom with challenges if you know what I'm saying. So God, in His Grace has allowed each and every one of my siblings to finally forgive, but they had to be again, willing participants, you have to be willing. And once you're willing, God can do something with willingness. He can't do nothing. If you're stubborn, if you're stubborn, God can't do nothing with you if you are stubborn, because it's his grace that allows you the freedom to say, God, I hurt and it hurts bad, and I can't do it alone. But I'm willing, and then he can do something with that.

Debora 13:37

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I also know that you experienced those tragic things when you were young and in your early 20s. But then you also experienced another very hurtful thing later on in life that required yet another layer and another level of forgiveness. Can you share that story with us?

Margaret

Okay, so then I find this awesome guy that I married and he met me two weeks after my mother was murdered. We married we have one child, so I only had one child because I had all these siblings to care for and I just didn't feel like I could bring in children and so we only had one and then unfortunately, when my son was 17 years old, he was killed by an impaired driver impaired on cocaine and not to make it just even worse to bad or bad the worse is that the man would just was not repentant. He was on he was Ansari didn't remember what happened. Blame things on everybody but himself in it was a very difficult challenge to go through the court system with somebody who was unrepentant and would blame everything on everybody but himself.

So that was very difficult and, and that that was a challenge that took a toll on my spiritual life. I remember screaming unto God with all of my mind screaming unto God, and He, I think, God, he can handle when you scream, he can handle you screaming at him. And I and I screamed at God. And I said, God, why? Why would you allow this awful tragedy to hit my life? And, and he told me, when I got quiet before him, he told me in my heart, he said, Just trust me. Just trust me. And then he allowed me again to face the choice to forgive.

Debora 15:52

Wow.

Margaret 15:54

Yeah, that's, that's forgiveness at a whole nother level, especially when the person is unrepentant, not showing any signs of remorse for what they've done. And that's when you truly have to get in God's face and allow him to give you the strength to forgive. When someone is unrepentant, and won't take responsibility for the choices that they've made. makes it even like a layered cake, it makes it worse, upon worse, because they're not saying they're sorry. So I will say to people don't look for someone to say that they're sorry, before you forgive, no, you have to choose to forgive and let God be the one with the revenge. God gets the revenge, not you. That's not my responsibility to read to find revenge. So, and that's for my stepfather as well. He never said he was well, eventually, he said he was sorry. But those first 20 years, I never got a letter from my stepdad who went to jail. Never got a letter saying, I'm sorry, it came later. But later is a long time when if you're waiting for somebody to say they're sorry. And he eventually did, but my offender who killed my son has not. So I'm okay with that. I'm okay with it.

Cousin, God has, by His grace has forgiven me. And in order for me to keep moving and living, I can't hold on to that feeling of hatred and being mad. I've got to let it go and let God and so it was a choice. Again, like I said, it's a choice. And then you live it out one day at a time.

Debora 17:56

And what has God done in your life as a result of these things? I mean, the Bible tells us that God uses all things, all things work together for our good for those that love the Lord, and I know you love the Lord Margaret. So how has God used even these tragedies in your life to further his kingdom?

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Margaret

Well, first and foremost, all eight of my brothers and sisters, by His grace and His mercy and His love for each one of us, have been successfully living our lives. We're, we're not in jail. We're not on drugs. We're not. We haven't killed somebody we haven't. We may have hurt people with our mouth. But we have had to live our lives and move forward. And forgive. And we're still forgiving. I mean, like I said, it's layers. But my, my greatest thing that I can speak of what God has done is that all eight of us have forgiven my stepfather.

We're all on the course of living our lives for him. We may be on a different, different track. It's sort of speak if you know what I'm saying. Some of us may be riding our bicycles and some of us on a fast moving train. But we're all on course living our lives for Jesus. Um, so for that I am I I'm just grateful to God for His grace. The next thing is to say that God used me to open up and have an endowment scholarship for children. And we have given away Bibles, we've given away many, many dollars for scholarships for people to go to college, and that has been successful. We have our I have been working very hard with Mothers Against Drunk Driving in their organization with efforts to encourage people to drive safely.

It has open doors for me to work in areas that I would have never believed that I would have the talents to work in as a magistrate that opened the door for me to work as a magistrate arraigning people for the very, very same challenges that my life experienced. However, by His grace, I've been able to, to judge those things with God helping me to do that, then I opened doors for other jobs. I mean, it's just been an amazing journey that God has given me and I'm thankful to him and for giving me other other avenues to use the giftings that He has given me, I'm working in the community in other organizations that to help people, the Boys and Girls Club and the Kiwanis Club and, and working with the Jefferson County criminal justice, board, and just different things, helping people who have been addicted to heroin and addicted to cocaine, and just all these avenues that have been awesome, that I would not have done had it not been for him helping me to forgive, because I don't think I could have done it without it.

Debora

Yeah, Margaret, you've been such a great example of Christ, forgiveness of us, He forgives us unconditionally for everything that we've done. And you're demonstrating that multiple times throughout your life from very hurtful things that many people would hold on to till their grave and not, not forgive for and God is blessing you as a result, he, he loves your obedience, and he loves your heart for him. And it's such a beautiful thing to see.

Margaret

Thank you for giving me a chance to share this in such as I mean, I'm giving you just a small amount. But a lot of a lot of it is a story that yet could yet unfold in so many areas in so many dimensions, that I'm just kind of giving you the outer outer core of it. But But if we could talk deeply, I'm telling you, it's a journey that only God can help us through that only God only God, because sometimes even even revisiting these areas are hurtful to talk about. Some of my memory of the of the tragedies I've been through, have been shrouded by His grace, because sometimes you can't revisit these places because they're so hurtful. I mean, it causes depression and causes exhaustion and despair. I mean, it can cause

you to go into destructive places in your life. And if you don't have the ability to forgive, which we don't, I'm gonna tell you now you and I don't have it within us to forgive at the level God wants us to.

Without him. Without him, you can't do it, you can try but you can't. Because those revisiting places where that are so hurtful, can tear you down into those places that if it doesn't, for God's grace, you can't, you can't get out of it. If I if you know what I'm saying. That depression and that, um, hopeless feeling that you can have. I don't know if I'm making myself make sense. But you are those dark places can really drag a person down and they can even see a glimmer of light to get up out of there. And it's such a terrible place to be. And that is why it is so important that we take that difficult step to trust God and to use his power to forgive others.

Debora

Yes, yeah, this week is Thanksgiving. And despite the coronavirus pandemic, a lot of people are still going to try to get together Thursday for Thanksgiving dinner. And as we've heard from your story, there are many, many people who have been hurt very deeply by family members. And as sometimes coming together for these holidays, that really dredges up all those hard feelings again, and people can hold on to unforgiveness for years. So what would you say to a person who's listening to our message today? And they are dreading going to be with family this week? And just because of unforgiveness, what would you say to them to help them release that?

Margaret 24:37

First of all, what comes to my mind first is that we have an enemy who seeks to kill, steal and destroy. God ordained family. That's his plan. It's what he wants. He designed the whole idea for family and we have an enemy who's against family. He hates family. He hates to kill togetherness. He hates it, he hates it to the point where he wants us to continually constantly be fighting with one another and holding on to stuff but God's word, it challenges us to number one to forgive number two, to let it go. Number three, not to keep revisiting stuff, sometimes we keep revisiting stuff, and it keeps us keeps us upset.

Some stuff you can forget and let go some stuff, you can just put it on a measuring, you can put it on a measure and say, Oh, that's not worth it. You know, somebody said something that they shouldn't have said, you know, come on, let it go. It's small matters. But then you've got some big stuff, like the stuff I've just shared with you. Then there's other stuff that people have done that have been very hurtful, you know, when they have abused you or just done made some choices that are that if they haven't asked for forgiveness, it's hard to see them face to face, you have to take each challenge with a family member one on one and with God and say, God, can you help me be at the table with my family. And if you can't, you just have to wait till the next year.

So but keep in mind, the enemy is the one trying to keep you from sitting at the table with your family. The enemy doesn't like us when we're getting along with our families. He, he hates that. Number two is our friends. He hates it when we're two or more gathered in his name, we are powerful, together two or more gathered in his name, to pray for his will to be done in the earth as planned in heaven. So the enemy's constantly against us being together in oneness with God's plan and his will to be carried out. And so we have to as Christians, we've got to see it beyond what's going on. And allow the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual eyes to see give us spiritual ears to hear what is it that God wants us to do, and don't let this minor stuff, get in the way the minor sins, but then the major ones, maybe he wants you to address

it, maybe he wants you to meet with them to say, I'm sorry. And maybe if they're not, if they're not even alive, then you have to write it down, you got to write it down to forgive them, or you've got to write it down to send them a letter.

Margaret 27:35

Ask the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit and be obedient, no matter how difficult because God will give you have the courage and the strength to be obedient. As he did with me. I took my brothers to the jail right after he killed my mom. My little brothers were seven and 11 years old. And I was obedient to the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit said, Now take those children go visit their dad. It wasn't their fault. They knew nothing. They knew nothing. And they lost a mom, they didn't they were too young to know much more about losing what was going on. They they didn't know what I knew.

So I took them to visit their dad. So guess what? That was a obedience to the Holy Spirit. And to this day, my little brother said it had it not been for those visits, he wouldn't have been able to get through his own life as he was being challenged with forgiveness for his dad when he became older. So anyway, just be obedient to Holy Spirit is what I would say. And sit down at the table with your family. And don't don't let them small matters. Keep you apart.

Debora

Oh, that's so good. Margaret. Would you pray for us as we end our session, pray for those that are out there struggling to forgive someone. I believe that someone has heard your story today. And there's a glimmer of hope in their heart that they could in fact, forgive someone that they've been holding on to pain and hurt for years. Would you mind praying for them at this time? Sure.

Margaret 29:15

Heavenly Father, I thank you. I thank you for the gift of forgiveness because you have forgiven us first. And you have given us grace and mercy when we didn't deserve it. And yet God you're calling us to forgive and so father, it is only by your grace, that we can even entertain the idea. So for anyone who is on this line, who is listening and they are on the fence, Father, help them help them to choose forgiveness help them Lord God, to choose to forgive, help them Holy Spirit, to forget and let go until allow you to turn those things around for yourself. And for your glorious plan that you have for us. Because had it not been, I don't know where I would be today had it not been the choice to forgive. So Father, thank you for your amazing, amazing grace that you extend to each one of us. That forgiveness that we must choose to forgive because your Word says so. But we can't do it in our own strength. So we do it in yours. Father, I pray for them. I ask God that by your Holy Spirit, not my mind, not by power, but by your Holy Spirit. Father, you will help us to move on and move past those hurtful places, those hurtful things, and only you can do it. I pray in Jesus name.

Debora 30:46

Amen.

Debora 30:49

Don't go away. We'll be right back after this short break.

<<MUSIC INTERLUDE>>

Debora 31:16

We just heard from Margaret Walker, some important truths about forgiveness, and why it is so important. Forgiveness is not excusing what someone else has done to hurt us. Forgiveness deals honestly with sin. The very fact that forgiveness is needed, indicates that what someone did was wrong and inexcusable.

We have all sinned against God. But God has extended forgiveness as a free gift to each one of us. Forgiveness is completely undeserved. And there's absolutely nothing that we can do to earn it. Romans 5:8 says that God demonstrated his own love toward us. And that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus Christ sacrificed his life to take away the sins of the world.

John 3:16 says, God so loved the world, that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, you can do that right now. It is by faith that we believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And if you're ready to place your trust in the Lordship of Jesus, and receive forgiveness for your sins, why don't you pray this prayer with me?

Debora 32:59

God, I confess that I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus in my life.

I repent of my sins and I turn to you.

I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. He was buried and rose from the dead. I accept this by faith. And I invite Jesus to be Lord of my life, to reign and rule in my heart.

Thank you for forgiving me and saving me. Amen.

Debora 33:32

If you just prayed that prayer, you are saved, and you will have eternal life with God. And you will have the power to forgive that Margaret talks so powerfully about.

If you've just accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we want to hear from you.

Visit my website at TBTWpodcast.com and let me know that you've made a decision for Christ so that I can encourage you on your spiritual journey.

Debora 34:04

My prayer for you today is that God will allow you to forgive. forgive anyone who has hurt you, so that you can receive the release and the peace that Margaret talked about.

Father in the name of Jesus, we ask that you give us the power to forgive the power to release all of the hurts and pains that others have caused us to release those things to you Lord, so that we might have a clear heart and a clear conscience before you in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Debora 34:42

Stay tuned for our next episode of transformed by the word where we will continue on the topic of forgiveness. Focusing on how do I forgive myself?

Announcer 35:00

Thank you for listening to transformed by the word with your host Debora Barr Be sure Subscribe to our podcast on iTunes or Google Play and connect with us at TBTWPodcast.com. Until next time, be blessed.