

HOW TO FORGIVE WHEN IT STILL HURTS

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HEALING THROUGH
FORGIVENESS



DBA MINISTRIES

HOW TO FORGIVE WHEN IT STILL HURTS



*A Christian Roadmap to Healing from Deep Betrayal and Emotional
Pain*

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN FORGIVENESS FEELS IMPOSSIBLE



The text message stared back at me from my phone screen, each word a fresh wound: “I never really loved you. There’s someone else.”

Maybe your moment looked different. Perhaps it was the friend who betrayed your deepest secret, the parent who chose addiction over you, or the church leader who shattered your trust. Whatever form it took, I know this: somewhere in your story, someone left you bleeding.

And now, well-meaning Christians keep telling you to “just forgive.”

As if forgiveness were as simple as flipping a switch. As if you could just decide not to feel the knife still lodged between your ribs. As if the mere mention of their name didn’t make your stomach churn and your hands clench into fists.

If you’ve picked up this book, chances are you already know you’re supposed to forgive. You’ve heard the sermons. You’ve read Matthew 6:14-15 until the words blur together. You understand, intellectually, that unforgiveness is poisoning your soul. But understanding and doing? Those are two vastly different mountains to climb.

Here’s what I need you to know before we take another step together: **God doesn’t expect you to pretend it doesn’t hurt.**

The Hidden Cost of Unforgiveness

Right now, unforgiveness might feel like your shield—the only thing protecting you from being hurt again. But what if I told you it’s actually your prison?

That person who wounded you? They’ve likely moved on with their life. Meanwhile, you’re the one lying awake at 2 AM, replaying conversations, imagining confrontations, feeling your heart race with fresh anger over old wounds. You’re the one who tenses up when you see someone who merely *resembles* them. You’re

the one whose prayers feel like they're bouncing off the ceiling because there's a wall of bitterness between you and God.

Unforgiveness doesn't punish them. It punishes you.

It shows up in ways you might not even recognize:

- That inability to fully trust in new relationships
- The way you sabotage good things because you're waiting for betrayal
- How you hold pieces of yourself back, even from God
- The exhaustion of carrying offense like a backpack full of stones
- That nagging sense that you're stuck, unable to move forward into the fullness of God's plan

Why This Journey Matters Now

You might wonder why forgiveness matters so much to your spiritual journey. After all, can't you just avoid that person and move on? Can't time heal all wounds?

But here's the truth that changed everything for me: **Unforgiveness is the single greatest blocker to intimacy with God and breakthrough in your purpose.**

Jesus didn't make forgiveness a suggestion. He made it a command. Not because He's harsh, but because He knows what harbored hurt does to His children. It calcifies around your heart. It clouds your spiritual vision. It clogs the very channels through which His love and power flow.

Every destiny-defining moment in scripture came after someone chose radical forgiveness:

- Joseph forgave his brothers and saved nations
- David forgave Saul and inherited a kingdom
- Stephen forgave his murderers and ushered Saul into Paul

What breakthrough is waiting on the other side of your forgiveness?

What You'll Discover in These Pages

This isn't another book that will shame you for struggling to forgive. Instead, through seven biblical principles and the raw, real stories of believers who've walked this path before you, you'll discover:

- Why forgiveness is a *command*, not a feeling—and how to obey even when everything in you resists
- How to release the offender without releasing the need for justice
- The surprising truth about Jesus and emotional wounds (spoiler: He gets it more than you think)
- Why forgiveness doesn't always mean reconciliation—and when boundaries are biblical
- How the enemy uses bitterness as a strategic weapon against your purpose
- The daily practice of forgiveness when old wounds resurface
- Why forgiving yourself might be the missing piece

You'll meet Corrie ten Boom, standing face-to-face with her Nazi torturer. Joyce Meyer, choosing to forgive the father who stole her innocence. Jackie Hill Perry,

finding healing from family rejection. T.D. Jakes, nearly derailed by ministry betrayal. Each story is a testament to this truth: **When we forgive the unforgivable, we experience the impossible.**

A Different Kind of Healing

I won't lie to you. This journey isn't easy. There will be moments when you'll want to close this book and choose the familiar ache of unforgiveness over the unknown territory of release.

But I promise you this: On the other side of forgiveness lies a freedom you can't imagine from where you're standing now.

Peace that doesn't depend on apologies you'll never receive. Joy that isn't held hostage by someone else's choices. Purpose that isn't derailed by past pain. Relationships unmarred by the shadows of old wounds. Prayers that reach heaven without the interference of bitterness.

Most importantly, you'll discover a Savior who doesn't just command forgiveness—He empowers it. A God who doesn't minimize your pain but transforms it. A Holy Spirit who doesn't expect perfection but partners with you in the process.

Your Invitation to Freedom

This book includes a 90-day forgiveness and healing plan, because lasting freedom doesn't happen overnight. It happens one choice, one prayer, one act of release at a time. Together, we'll walk through the daily work of untangling the roots of bitterness and planting seeds of grace.

But it starts with a decision. Not a decision to feel differently—feelings will follow obedience in their own time. Rather, a decision to begin. To crack open the door of your heart, just an inch, to the possibility that you can forgive even when it still hurts.

That person who wounded you? They've taken enough. They've taken your peace, your trust, maybe even years of your life. Don't let them take your future too.

Your story doesn't end with what was done to you. It begins with what you choose to do next.

Will you choose freedom?

Turn the page. Let's begin.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

— Colossians 3:13

CHAPTER 1

FORGIVENESS IS A COMMAND, NOT A FEELING



The frail woman stood frozen in the church doorway, her weathered hands trembling against her worn Bible. Corrie ten Boom had preached this message of forgiveness a thousand times since her release from Ravensbruck concentration camp. She had traveled the world declaring God's forgiveness, teaching others to release their captors, to let go of the unthinkable.

But now, in a church basement in Munich, 1947, her message had taken flesh.

Walking toward her with an outstretched hand was one of them. A guard. Not just any guard— *that* guard. The one who had stood watch while she and her beloved sister Betsie were forced to strip naked for inspection. The one whose mocking eyes had watched their humiliation. The one who had been there when Betsie's body was thrown onto a pile of corpses like garbage.

"Fraulein, I have become a Christian," he said, his hand still extended. "I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein, will you forgive me?"

Time froze. Corrie's blood turned to ice water in her veins. Forgive? This monster who had participated in Betsie's death? This man who represented everything evil that had stolen her family, her home, her dignity?

And in that moment, Corrie ten Boom discovered what every wounded heart eventually learns: **forgiveness is not a feeling. It's a command.**

The Moment Everything Changes

Perhaps you've never stood in a concentration camp, but you've stood in your own moments of impossibility. That moment when:

- Your spouse admits to the affair
- Your parent chooses their addiction over you again
- Your best friend spreads the secrets you whispered in confidence
- Your business partner steals everything and disappears

- Your pastor, the one you trusted with your spiritual life, is exposed as a fraud. In these moments, forgiveness feels like the cruelest command God could give. How dare He ask this of us? Doesn't He see our pain? Doesn't He understand what they've taken from us?

But here's what I've learned from studying that basement in Munich: God never asks us to do what He hasn't already empowered us to accomplish. The command to forgive isn't cruel—it's the key to our freedom.

Understanding the Command

Let's start with what might be the most challenging words Jesus ever spoke:

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

— Matthew 6:14-15

I remember the first time those verses really sank in. I was 23, curled up on my apartment floor, sobbing over a betrayal that had shattered my world. My mentor had sat with me for hours, listening to my pain, validating my hurt. Then she gently opened her Bible to these verses.

"This isn't fair!" I wanted to scream. "How can God's forgiveness of me depend on my forgiveness of someone who isn't even sorry?"

But that's when she helped me understand: This isn't God being petty. This is God being protective.

Why Forgiveness Is Non-Negotiable

God doesn't command forgiveness because He's indifferent to our pain. He commands it because He knows what unforgiveness does to His children. Consider what happens when we refuse to forgive:

1. Unforgiveness Chains Us to Our Worst Moments

When we refuse to forgive, we become prisoners of time, locked forever in the moment of our deepest wound. The offense happened once, but through unforgiveness, we relive it a thousand times. We become curators of our own pain museum, carefully preserving every detail of how we were wronged.

2. Unforgiveness Poisons Our Spiritual Well

Jesus knew that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. It seeps into every area of our spiritual life:

- Our prayers feel hollow because we're harboring sin
- Our worship feels forced because bitterness has hardened our hearts
- Our service feels empty because we're serving from obligation, not overflow
- Our relationships suffer because we project old wounds onto new people

3. Unforgiveness Gives the Enemy Legal Ground

Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:26-27: “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Unforgiveness is like leaving your front door wide open with a sign that says, “Satan, come on in and make yourself at home.”

The enemy uses our unforgiveness to torment us with:

- Recurring nightmares about the offense
- Intrusive thoughts during prayer and worship
- Inability to trust or connect deeply with others
- Physical ailments linked to emotional stress
- Spiritual stagnation and blocked purpose

4. Unforgiveness Distorts Our Identity

When we refuse to forgive, we begin to define ourselves by what was done to us rather than by what Christ has done for us. We become “the one who was betrayed” or “the one who was abandoned” instead of “the one who is beloved, chosen, and redeemed.”

Back to the Basement

Standing before her former guard, Corrie ten Boom wrestled with everything we’ve just discussed—though she had mere seconds to process it. Her hand remained frozen at her side. The man’s hand remained extended. The silence stretched between them like an eternity.

“Jesus, help me!” she prayed silently. “I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.”

And so, woodenly, mechanically, Corrie ten Boom thrust her hand into the hand of her former tormentor.

What happened next defied human explanation.

“As I did,” she later wrote, “an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. ‘I forgive you, brother!’ I cried. ‘With all my heart!’”

For a long moment, they grasped hands—the former guard and the former prisoner. Corrie had never known God’s love so intensely as she did in that moment.

The Anatomy of Obedient Forgiveness

Corrie’s story reveals the anatomy of what I call “obedient forgiveness”—choosing to forgive not because we feel like it, but because God commands it. Let’s break down what this looks like:

1. Acknowledge the Command

The first step is simply acknowledging that forgiveness isn’t optional for believers. It’s not a suggestion for the super-spiritual. It’s not something we’ll get around to when we feel better. It’s a direct command from the mouth of Jesus.

This doesn't minimize your pain. God isn't saying what happened to you doesn't matter. He's saying your freedom matters more than your right to remain wounded.

2. Admit Your Inability

Corrie didn't pretend she had the power to forgive this man. She admitted her complete inability. "Jesus, help me!" was her cry.

This is crucial because as long as we're trying to forgive in our own strength, we'll fail. Forgiveness of deep wounds is a supernatural act that requires supernatural power. It's like trying to perform heart surgery on yourself—you need the Great Physician's hands.

3. Take the First Physical Step

Notice what Corrie did: she lifted her hand. She didn't wait for feelings. She didn't wait for the desire. She took a physical action of obedience while her emotions screamed in protest.

What might this look like for you?

- Speaking the words "I forgive ____" out loud, even through tears
- Writing a letter of forgiveness (whether you send it or not)
- Praying blessing over the person who hurt you
- Removing visible reminders that fuel your anger
- Choosing to stop rehearsing the offense in conversations

4. Trust God for the Feeling

Corrie asked God to "supply the feeling." She separated the act of forgiveness from the emotion of forgiveness. This is perhaps the most liberating truth in this entire chapter: **You don't have to feel forgiving to be obedient in forgiveness.**

Feelings are real, but they're not always reliable. They're important, but they're not in charge. When we choose obedience despite our feelings, we position ourselves for God to do what only He can do—heal our emotions to align with our obedience.

Common Misconceptions That Keep Us Bound

Before we go further, let's address some common misconceptions about forgiveness that keep people trapped:

Misconception 1: "Forgiveness Means Pretending It Didn't Happen"

Forgiveness is not denial. God never asks us to rewrite history or minimize genuine wounds. When Joseph forgave his brothers, he still acknowledged what they did: "You intended to harm me" (Genesis 50:20). Forgiveness faces the full truth of the offense and chooses to release it anyway.

Misconception 2: "Forgiveness Means They Get Away With It"

Forgiveness is not about them—it's about you. It doesn't erase consequences or remove the need for justice. It simply means you're no longer volunteering to be the judge, jury, and executioner. You're transferring the case to a higher court.

Romans 12:19 promises, “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath.”

Misconception 3: “Forgiveness Means Instant Restoration of Trust”

Forgiveness can happen in a moment. Trust is rebuilt over time. Jesus forgave Peter instantly after his denial, but Peter still had to prove his devotion through future actions. Forgiveness doesn’t mean becoming a doormat or returning to unsafe situations.

Misconception 4: “I Can’t Forgive Until They Apologize”

This might be the most dangerous misconception because it gives all the power to the person who hurt you. Jesus didn’t wait for apologies from the cross. Stephen didn’t wait for his killers to show remorse. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself, regardless of the other person’s response.

Misconception 5: “If I Still Feel Hurt, I Haven’t Really Forgiven”

Forgiveness doesn’t erase memory or eliminate all pain immediately. You can forgive someone and still need to heal from what they did. Think of it like a physical wound—you can choose not to keep re-injuring it (unforgiveness) while still needing time for full healing (emotional restoration).

The Practical Path Forward

So how do we move from understanding forgiveness as a command to actually walking it out? Here are practical steps based on both biblical truth and the testimonies of those who’ve walked this path:

Step 1: Get Alone with God

Find a quiet place where you can be completely honest with God. Pour out your pain, your anger, your desire for revenge. He can handle it. David did this repeatedly in the Psalms, and God called him a man after His own heart.

Tell God:

- Exactly what was done to you
- How it made you feel
- What you wish would happen to them
- Why forgiveness feels impossible

This isn’t complaining—it’s confession. You’re admitting the true state of your heart so God can begin His work.

Step 2: Remember Your Own Forgiveness

This is what Jesus was highlighting in Matthew 18:21-35 with the parable of the unmerciful servant. The servant who was forgiven an impossible debt refused to forgive a small debt owed to him.

Take time to remember:

- The sins God has forgiven in your life
- The price Jesus paid for your forgiveness
- The times you’ve hurt others and received mercy
- The ongoing grace you need daily

This isn't about minimizing what was done to you. It's about maintaining perspective on the immeasurable forgiveness you've received.

Step 3: Make the Declaration

Even if your voice shakes, even if tears stream down your face, even if everything in you resists, speak the words out loud:

"In the name of Jesus, I choose to forgive [name] for [specific offense]. I release them from my judgment. I release myself from the prison of unforgiveness. I ask You, Lord, to bless them and to heal me."

You might need to say this daily—or hourly—at first. That's okay. Jesus said if someone sins against you seven times in a day and asks forgiveness seven times, forgive them (Luke 17:3-4). The same principle applies to our practice of forgiveness.

Step 4: Act in Alignment

After Corrie shook hands with her former guard, she had to walk out of that basement and continue living. Forgiveness isn't just a moment—it's a lifestyle. This means:

- When thoughts of revenge come, choose thoughts of blessing
- When conversations drift toward bitterness, change the subject
- When memories trigger anger, turn them into prayers
- When you see or hear about the person, pray for their wellbeing

Step 5: Partner with the Holy Spirit for Healing

Forgiveness opens the door, but the Holy Spirit does the deep healing work. Invite Him to:

- Reveal any roots of bitterness you haven't seen
- Heal the wounded places in your heart
- Restore what the enemy has stolen
- Renew your mind with His truth
- Transform your pain into purpose

When Forgiveness Feels Stuck

What if you've tried to forgive but feel stuck? What if the anger keeps returning? What if you've said the words but nothing has changed? Here are some reasons forgiveness might feel blocked:

You're trying to forgive the wrong thing. Sometimes we're trying to forgive surface issues when the real wound goes deeper. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the core wound that needs forgiveness.

You're carrying false guilt. Sometimes we struggle to forgive others because we haven't forgiven ourselves for our perceived role in the situation. We'll address this more in Chapter 7.

You're afraid of being hurt again. Forgiveness can feel like lowering your defenses. Remember: forgiveness doesn't mean returning to unsafe situations.

You're grieving genuine losses. Forgiveness doesn't instantly restore what was taken. You might need to grieve the marriage you'll never have, the childhood you deserved, or the opportunity that was stolen.

You need deliverance. Sometimes unforgiveness has given the enemy such a stronghold that you need others to pray with you for freedom. There's no shame in seeking help.

The Corrie Conclusion

Corrie ten Boom went on to travel to more than 60 countries, sharing her story of forgiveness. She often said, "Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart."

But here's what many don't know: That former guard became one of her most powerful testimonies. When people doubted God could forgive their sins, she would tell them about the Nazi guard who found grace. When people said their enemies were beyond redemption, she would share how God transformed a man who had participated in genocide.

The forgiveness she extended in that basement didn't just free her—it became a key that unlocked freedom for countless others.

Your Moment of Decision

You may not be standing in a Munich basement facing a concentration camp guard, but you're standing at your own crossroads. Someone has wounded you deeply. The pain is real. The offense was genuine. The damage has been devastating.

And Jesus is asking you to forgive.

Not because they deserve it. Not because it didn't matter. Not because you have to pretend everything is fine.

He's asking you to forgive because He loves you too much to leave you in the prison of unforgiveness. He sees the destiny still ahead of you. He knows the freedom waiting on the other side of obedience. He understands the healing that begins the moment you release your grip on the offense.

Will you lift your hand? Will you speak the words? Will you trust Him to supply what you cannot manufacture?

Remember: Forgiveness is not a feeling waiting to arrive. It's a command waiting to be obeyed.

And in the obedience—in that wooden, mechanical, reluctant act of the will—the miracle happens. Not always instantly like it did for Corrie. Sometimes it's a gradual sunrise rather than a lightning strike. But it happens.

The current begins in your shoulder. It races down your arm. It springs into life. And suddenly, inexplicably, you're free.

Prayer of Activation

Lord Jesus, I come before You with a heart that doesn't want to forgive. Like Corrie in that basement, I feel frozen by my pain. But I choose to obey Your command above my emotions.

I confess that I have held unforgiveness toward [name]. I have rehearsed their offense, nursed my wounds, and planned my revenge. I have allowed bitterness to take root in my heart.

But today, in Jesus' name, I choose to forgive. Not because I feel like it. Not because they deserve it. But because You command it and You will empower it.

I release [name] from my judgment. I place them in Your hands. I choose to bless instead of curse. I ask You to supply what I cannot—the feeling of forgiveness, the healing of memories, the restoration of joy.

Holy Spirit, reveal any hidden roots of bitterness. Show me if there are others I need to forgive. Give me the strength to walk out this forgiveness daily until it becomes my testimony.

Thank You that You don't require perfection, just obedience. Thank You that Your commands come with Your enabling. Thank You that freedom is possible, even when it still hurts.

In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What wound in your life feels like your “Munich basement moment”—the forgiveness that seems impossible? 2. Which misconception about forgiveness has kept you bound the longest? How does the truth set you free? 3. What physical step of obedience can you take today, regardless of your feelings? 4. How has unforgiveness affected your relationship with God? What would change if you were free? 5. Who in your life needs to hear Corrie's story? How might your obedience to forgive become someone else's key to freedom?

Remember: The command to forgive isn't God being cruel. It's God being kind. He knows that our destiny is too important and our purpose too vital to be held hostage by someone else's sin.

Your story doesn't end with what they did to you. It begins with what you choose to do in response.

Choose forgiveness. Choose freedom. Choose life.

Even when—especially when—it still hurts.

CHAPTER 2

RELEASE THE OFFENDER, NOT THE JUSTICE

Joyce Meyer stood outside her father's hospital room, her hand frozen on the door handle. Inside lay the man who had stolen her innocence, shattered her childhood, and left her with wounds that had taken decades to heal. The man who had sexually abused her for years, turning what should have been a safe home into a chamber of horrors.

Now he was dying. And God was asking her to go in and forgive him.

Everything in her screamed against it. Where was justice in this? He had never paid for what he did. Never faced consequences. Never even acknowledged the devastation he'd caused. And now God wanted her to release him?

"Lord," she whispered in that hospital hallway, "how is this fair?"

And in that moment, Joyce Meyer learned one of the most powerful truths about forgiveness: **Releasing the offender doesn't mean releasing the need for justice. It means transferring the case to a Judge who never fails.**

The Justice Dilemma

If you've been deeply wounded, you know the burning question that keeps many of us from forgiveness: "What about justice?"

It feels like forgiveness lets them off the hook. Like we're saying what they did was okay. Like we're enabling them to hurt others. Like God Himself doesn't care about right and wrong.

This is especially acute when:

- Your abuser never faced legal consequences
- The person who hurt you is thriving while you're still struggling
- They've never acknowledged what they did
- Others don't know the truth about them
- They're still hurting other people