

# Forgiveness-Quotes and Illustrations

**Our Daily Bread** illustration of forgiveness - Bruce Goodrich was being initiated into the cadet corps at Texas A & M University. One night, Bruce was forced to run until he dropped -- but he never got up. Bruce Goodrich died before he even entered college.

A short time after the tragedy, Bruce's father wrote this letter to the administration, faculty, student body, and the corps of cadets: "I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A & M University and the college community over the loss of our son Bruce. We were deeply touched by the tribute paid to him in the battalion. We were particularly pleased to note that his Christian witness did not go unnoticed during his brief time on campus."

Mr. Goodrich went on: "I hope it will be some comfort to know that we harbor no ill will in the matter. We know our God makes no mistakes. Bruce had an appointment with his Lord and is now secure in his celestial home. When the question is asked, 'Why did this happen?' perhaps one answer will be, 'So that many will consider where they will spend eternity.'" ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)) March 22, 1994.

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In his book [Lee: The Last Years, Charles Bracelen](#), Charles Bracelen Flood reports that after the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Federal artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss. After a brief silence, Lee said, "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it." It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow them to remain, let bitterness take root and poison the rest of our life. (Michael Williams)

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When the first missionaries came to Alberta, Canada, they were savagely opposed by a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon. But he responded to the gospel and accepted Christ. Shortly afterward, a member of the Blackfoot tribe killed his father. Maskepetoon rode into the village where the murderer lived and demanded that he be brought before him. Confronting the guilty man, he said,

"You have killed my father, so now you must be my father. You shall ride my best horse and wear my best clothes."

In utter amazement and remorse his enemy exclaimed,

"My son, now you have killed me!"

He meant, of course, that the hate in his own heart had been completely erased by the forgiveness and kindness of the Indian chief. ([Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute](#))

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In May 1924, a shocked nation learned two young men from Chicago, Richard Leopold and Nathan Loeb, had killed 14-year-old Bobbie Franks. What made the crime so shocking, and made Leopold and Loeb household names, was the reason for the killing. The two became obsessed with the idea of committing the "perfect murder," and simply picked young Franks as their victim. They were sentenced to life imprisonment, but Leopold was killed in a prison brawl in 1936. Claiming he wanted "a chance to find redemption for myself and to help others," Nathan Loeb became a hospital technician at his parole in 1958. He died in 1971. ([Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute](#))

**John Bunyan's Picture of Forgiveness in his allegory Pilgrim's Progress** - In the beautiful memorial window of the Abbey Church at Elstow, the visitor can see, in the mystic colors of ecclesiastical glass, Christian (a major character in Pilgrim's Progress) **kneeling at the foot of the Cross, while his dark and heavy burden rolls from his shoulders.** John Bunyan's immortal picture is as true and brief an answer as can be given to the question, "What is the result of forgiveness?" Christian said that he "**saw it no more**"—the burden was gone. This will always be true. It does not mean that the memory of transgression will pass, or that its shadow will never fall across our path; but that the sting and shame and pain which constitute its burden are gone.—C. E. McCartney (Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times)

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A childhood accident caused poet Elizabeth Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846. There's more to the story. In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth

found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored. (Daily Walk Devotional - The Navigators)

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In the 14th century, Robert Bruce of Scotland was leading his men in a battle to gain independence from England. Near the end of the conflict, the English wanted to capture Bruce to keep him from the Scottish crown. So they put his own bloodhounds on his trail. When the bloodhounds got close, Bruce could hear their baying. His attendant said, "We are done for. They are on your trail, and they will reveal your hiding place." Bruce replied, "It's all right." Then he headed for a stream that flowed through the forest. He plunged in and waded upstream a short distance. When he came out on the other bank, he was in the depths of the forest. Within minutes, the hounds, tracing their master's steps, came to the bank. They went no farther. The English soldiers urged them on, but the trail was broken. The stream had carried the scent away. A short time later, the crown of Scotland rested on the head of Robert Bruce. The memory of our sins, prodded on by Satan, can be like those baying dogs--but a stream flows, red with the blood of God's own Son. By grace through faith we are safe. No sin-hound can touch us. The trail is broken by the precious blood of Christ. "The purpose of the cross," someone observed, "is to repair the irreparable." ([E. Lutzer, Putting Your Past Behind You](#))

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There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father. On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers. (Bits & Pieces, October 15, 1992)

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- There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness. Anon.
- We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive. Anon.
- If you are suffering from a bad man's injustice, forgive him lest there be two bad men. Augustine
- It is the person who most knows himself liable to fall that will be most ready to overlook any offences from his fellow men. Alexander Auld
- You should forgive many things in others, but nothing in yourself. Ausonius
- Every man should have a fair-sized cemetery in which to bury the faults of his friends. Henry Ward Beecher
- The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness. William Blake
- The Christian can always afford to forgive—and can never afford not to! John Blanchard
- Nothing causes us to so nearly resemble God as the forgiveness of injuries. Chrysostom
- Nothing in this low and ruined world bears the meek impress of the Son of God so surely as forgiveness. Alice Clay
- The unforgiving spirit as a pride form is the number one killer of spiritual life. James Coulter
- We are not finished with the need of forgiveness when we become Christians. G. B. Duncan
- The noblest revenge is to forgive. Thomas Fuller
- There's no point in burying a hatchet if you're going to put up a marker on the site. Sydney Harris
- Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude. Martin Luther King
- Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive. C. S. Lewis
- If God forgives us, we must forgive others. Otherwise it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than him. C. S. Lewis
- I say to the glory of God and in utter humility that whenever I see myself before God and realize even something of what my blessed Lord has done for me, I am ready to forgive anybody anything. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- If we really know Christ as our Saviour our hearts are broken and cannot be hard, and we cannot refuse forgiveness D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- Those who say they will forgive but can't forget, simply bury the hatchet but leave the handle out for immediate use. D. L. Moody
- A Christian will find it cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves us the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits. Hannah More
- If you have a thing to pardon, pardon it quickly. Slow forgiveness is little better than no forgiveness Arthur W Pinero
- To err is human, to forgive divine. Alexander Pope
- Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness, or else when forgiving another. Jean Paul Richter
- It is a melancholy fact that there are few Christian duties so little practised as that of forgiveness. J. C. Ryle
- No prayers can be heard which do not come from a forgiving heart. J. C. Ryle
- Forgive and forget. When you bury a mad dog, don't leave his tail above the ground. C. H. Spurgeon
- You never so touch the ocean of God's love as when you forgive and love your enemies. Corrie Ten Boom
- Forgiveness is a funny thing—it warms the heart and cools the sting. William A. Ward
- Friendship flourishes at the fountain of forgiveness. William A. Ward

- A man may as well go to hell for not forgiving as for not believing. Thomas Watson

--From **Complete Gathered Gold by John Blanchard** - highly recommended resource ([Logos](#)) ([Accordance](#)) ([Olive Tree](#))

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- A retentive memory is a good thing, but the ability to forget is the true token of greatness. ELBERT GREEN HUBBARD (1856–1915)
- Alas! if my best Friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances in which I have neglected him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense? I will pray, therefore, for blessings on my friends, even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies, though they continue such. WILLIAM COWPER (1731–1800)
- An injury is much sooner forgiven than an insult. LORD CHESTERFIELD (1694–1773)
- As we grow in wisdom, we pardon more freely. ANNE-LOUISE-GERMAINE DE STAËL (1766–1817)
- Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you even with him; forgiving it sets you above him.
- For the sake of one good action a hundred evil ones should be forgotten. CHINESE PROVERB
- Forgiveness is a funny thing—it warms the heart and cools the sting. WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD (1812–1882)
- Forgiveness is a required course. CHARLES R. SWINDOLL (1934–)
- Forgiveness is man’s deepest need and highest achievement. HORACE BUSHNELL (1802–1876)
- Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a permanent attitude. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1929–1968)
- Forgiveness is not that stripe which says, “I will forgive, but not forget.” It is not to bury the hatchet with the handle sticking out of the ground, so you can grasp it the minute you want it. DWIGHT LYMAN MOODY (1837–1899)
- Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it. MARK TWAIN (1835–1910)
- Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note—torn in two and burned up, so that it never can be shown against one. HENRY WARD BEECHER (1813–1887)
- Good to forgive; Best, to forget! ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889)
- He that demands mercy, and shows none, ruins the bridge over which he himself is to pass. THOMAS ADAMS (1612–1653)
- He who forgives ends the quarrel. AFRICAN PROVERB
- Humanity is never so beautiful as when praying for forgiveness or when forgiving another. JOHANN PAUL FRIEDRICH RICHTER (1763–1825)
- If God were not willing to forgive sin, heaven would be empty. GERMAN PROVERB
- It is cheaper to pardon than to resent. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred. HANNAH MORE (1745–1833)
- It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI (C. 1181–1226)
- Life lived without forgiveness becomes a prison. WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD (1812–1882)
- Only one petition in the Lord’s Prayer has any condition attached to it. It is the petition for forgiveness. WILLIAM TEMPLE (1628–1699)
- Regard as enormous the little wrong you did to others, and as trifling the great wrong done to you. TALMUD
- The heaviest load any man carries on his back is a pack of grudges.
- The voice of sin is loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder. DWIGHT LYMAN MOODY (1837–1899)
- To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; but to return good for evil is godlike.
- We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it. C. S. LEWIS (1898–1963)
- We hand folks over to God’s mercy and show none ourselves. GEORGE ELIOT (1819–1880)
- When God pardons, he consigns the offense to everlasting forgetfulness. MERV ROSELL
- When you forgive you in no way change the past—but you sure do change the future. BERNARD MELTZER
- You must choose to forgive whoever has wronged you. Forgiveness is not an emotion, it is a decision of the will. (Ed note: Enabled by the Spirit!) ERWIN W. LUTZER (1941–)
- Christians aren’t perfect—just forgiven.

- From Draper's Quotations

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**Vernon Grounds** relates a wonderful story of the power of forgiveness in Ernest Gordon’s *Miracle on the River Kwai*...

The Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad, had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened. A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot ... It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel,

and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first check point. The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! ... The incident had a profound effect... The men began to treat each other like brothers. When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors (and instead of attacking their captors) insisted: "No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness." Sacrificial love had transformed the hearts and minds and produced a supernatural forgiveness.

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#### **BEWARE OF RESENTMENT - SUBTLE FORM OF UNFORGIVING SPIRIT** - William Barclay remarks,

There may be greater sins than touchiness, but there is none which does greater damage in the Christian church."

Many of us are quick to take offense and slow to forgive. The great Samuel Johnson once made a sarcastic remark about an acquaintance that was repeated by a hearer to the man, but without the accompanying remark that "he was a very good man." His biographer Boswell writes that the man

**could never forgive this hasty contemptuous expression.** It rankled in his mind; and though I informed him of all that Johnson said, and that he would be very glad to meet him amicably, he positively declined repeated offers which I made, and once went off abruptly from a house where he and I were engaged to dine, because he was told that Dr. Johnson was to be there. I have no sympathetic feeling with such persevering resentment.

Indeed God's Word has no such sympathy either, because God's honored servants must bear evil without being resentful. (Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B.1 & 2 Timothy and Titus : To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

**HOW CAN I FORGIVE?** - Some of life's hurts are so deep and painful that to forgive the people who caused them seems impossible. Yet Jesus says that we can't experience His forgiveness if we have an unforgiving spirit.

In World War II, Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie were arrested for concealing Jews and were sent to a German concentration camp. Betsie died a slow and terrible death as a result of the cruel treatment.

Then, in 1947, Corrie spoke about God's forgiveness to a church in Munich. Afterward, a man sought her out. She recognized him as one of the guards who had mistreated her and Betsie. He told her that he had become a Christian, and with extended hand he asked for her forgiveness. Corrie struggled with her feelings, but when she recalled the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:15, she knew she had to forgive. She silently prayed, "Jesus, help me!" and thrust her hand into the hand of her former tormentor.

Someone has said, "Forgiveness is not a case of 'holy amnesia' that wipes out the past. Instead, it is the experience of healing that drains the poison from the wound."

God asks us to do for others what He has done for us through Jesus Christ. He'll give us strength to forgive. - D J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord Jesus, give us grace each day  
That we may follow in Your way,  
Especially when some unloved soul  
Needs our forgiving to be whole.

**Since we all need forgiveness,  
we should always be forgiving.**

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**John Stott** (in *The Contemporary Christian*) wrote that "Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candor in television, Marghanita Laski, one of our best-known secular humanists and novelists, said, "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."

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**Warren Wiersbe** explains that "God's forgiveness of sinners is an act of His grace. We did not deserve to be forgiven, nor can we earn forgiveness. Knowing that we are forgiven makes it possible for us to fellowship with God, enjoy His grace, and seek to do His will. Forgiveness is not an excuse for sin; rather, it is an encouragement for obedience. And, because we have been forgiven, we can forgive others (Col 3:13, Ep 4:32-note). **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant makes it clear that an unforgiving spirit always leads to bondage** (Matt. 18:21-33, 34, 35). ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. Victor](#)) (Bolding added)

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As someone has well said an **unforgiving spirit** is the devil's playground, and before long it becomes the Christian's battleground. If somebody hurts us, either deliberately or unintentionally, and we do not forgive them, then the potential is for us to develop bitterness, which hardens the heart. We should be tenderhearted and kind, but instead we are hardhearted and bitter. Actually, we are not hurting the person who hurt us but are only hurting ourselves. Bitterness in the heart makes us treat others the way Satan treats them, when we should treat others the way God has treated us. In His gracious kindness, God has forgiven us, and we should forgive others. God Himself is infinitely kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving, and we show those virtues by imitating their Source. We do not forgive for our sake or even for their sake, but for Jesus' sake. Learning how to forgive is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life.

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**Careless Word-** In 1980, Lee Atwater, a political campaign manager, inflicted terrible pain with his words. His staff learned that an opposing congressional candidate from South Carolina had once experienced severe depression and undergone electric shock therapy. When Atwater released the information to the press, it humiliated the candidate and cast doubt on his ability. In anguish, the man questioned Atwater's campaign ethics. Atwater responded by saying that he had no intention of responding to a man "hooked up to a jumper cable." Ten years later, Atwater was afflicted with an incurable brain tumor. He was confined to bed, attached to machines and tubes and wires. Before he died, he wrote the candidate a letter and asked to be forgiven (Eph 4:32-note). He saw how cruel and heartless his words had been.

(EDITORIAL THOUGHT- It strikes me that so many [too many] people wait until they are about to die to seek forgiveness for wrongs they have carried around their entire life and which have "gnawed" away at their conscience and their very soul. Dear reader I must ask you - Is there someone from whom you need to seek forgiveness? Or is there someone to whom you need to grant forgiveness, "canceling their debt" against you and thereby releasing yourself from the unyielding prison of resentment and bitterness, feelings that you have willfully chosen to keep "bottled" up inside your heart and mind for days, months or perhaps even years? If the Spirit prompts you, I pray you do not delay, for your sake and the sake of His Name. Amen

Our words can be just as devastating. And it seems that it's our children or family or fellow believers whom we hurt the most. As believers in Christ, we have an obligation before God to evaluate the impact of our words. Idle, angry, hateful words can inflict great harm, for which we will be held accountable (Mt 12:36, 37).

Ask God for help. Before hurtful words come pouring out of your mouth, think first—then leave them unsaid. —D C Egner [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Use words of kindness, filled with love,  
That heal and nourish life  
Instead of hurling angry words  
That wound and stir up strife. —Sper

**Think before you act.  
Think twice before you speak.**

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Chuck Swindoll reports that a seminary student in Chicago faced a forgiveness test. Although he preferred to work in some kind of ministry, the only job he could find was driving a bus on Chicago's south side. One day a gang of tough teens got on board and refused to pay the fare. After a few days of this, the seminarian spotted a policeman on the corner, stopped the bus, and reported them. The officer made them pay, but then he got off. When the bus rounded a corner, the gang robbed the seminarian and beat him severely. He pressed charges and the gang was rounded up. They were found guilty. But as soon as the jail sentence was given, the young Christian saw their spiritual need and felt pity for them. So he asked the judge if he could serve their sentences for them. The gang members and the judge were dumbfounded. "It's because I forgive you," he explained. His request was denied, but he visited the young men in jail and led several of them to faith in Christ. (Swindoll also wrote "Forgiveness is a required course!")

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Swindoll - We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive.

Swindoll - The extent to which you can envision God's forgiveness of you, to that same measure you will be given the capacity to forgive others.

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"The man I ate dinner with tonight killed my brother." The words, spoken by a stylish woman at a PF banquet in Seattle, amazed me. She told how John H. had murdered her brother during a robbery, served 18 years at Walla Walla, then settled into life on a dairy

farm, where she had met him in 1983, 20 years after his crime. Compelled by Christ's command to forgive, Ruth Youngsman had gone to her enemy and pronounced forgiveness. Then she had taken him to her father's deathbed, prompting reconciliation.

Some wouldn't call this a success story: John didn't dedicate his life to Christ. But at that PF banquet last fall, his voice cracked as he said, "Christians are the only people I know that you can kill their son, and they'll make you a part of their family. I don't know the Man Upstairs, but He sure is hounding me."

John's story is unfinished; he hasn't yet accepted Christ. But just as Christ died for us regardless of our actions or acceptance, so Ruth forgave him without qualification. Even more so, she became his friend. (Albert H. Quie, President of Prison Fellowship Ministries, Jubilee, p. 5)

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A sign in a convenience store read, "Check Cashing Policy: To err is human. To forgive, \$10." It's a funny way to recognize the fact that we make mistakes, but it's also evidence of the way many people think about forgiveness.

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A captive was once brought before King James II of England. The King reprimanded the prisoner: "Don't you know that it is in my power to pardon you?" The scared, shaking prisoner replied, "Yes, I know it is in your power to pardon me, but it is not in your nature." The prisoner had keen insight to know that unless a person had a spiritual rebirth, we have no nature to forgive. Only God can change our hearts to become like His.

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Corrie ten Boom told of not being able to forget a wrong that had been done to her. She had forgiven the person, but she kept rehashing the incident and so couldn't sleep. Finally Corrie cried out to God for help in putting the problem to rest. "His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor," Corrie wrote, "to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks." "Up in the church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding, then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down." "And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversations, but the force -- which was my willingness in the matter -- had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at the last stopped altogether: we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts."

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A couple married for 15 years began having more than usual disagreements. They wanted to make their marriage work and agreed on an idea the wife had. For one month they planned to drop a slip in a "Fault" box. The boxes would provide a place to let the other know about daily irritations. The wife was diligent in her efforts and approach: "leaving the jelly top off the jar," "wet towels on the shower floor," "dirty socks not in hamper," on and on until the end of the month. After dinner, at the end of the month, they exchanged boxes. The husband reflected on what he had done wrong. Then the wife opened her box and began reading. They were all the same, the message on each slip was, "I love you!"

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Marie de Medicis, the Italian-born wife of King Henri IV of France, became the regent for their son Louis after her husband's death in 1610. In later years her relationship with Louis soured and they lived in a state of ongoing hostility. Marie also felt a deep sense of betrayal when Cardinal Richelieu, whom she had helped in his rise to political power, deserted her and went over to her son's side. While on her deathbed Marie was visited by Fabio Chigi, who was papal nuncio of France. Marie vowed to forgive all of her enemies, including Cardinal Richelieu. "Madam," asked Chigi, "as a mark of reconciliation, will you send him the bracelet you wear on your arm?" "No," she replied firmly, "that would be too much."

True forgiveness is hard to extend because it demands that people let go of something they value -- not a piece of jewelry, but pride, perhaps, as sense of justice, or desire for revenge. (Daily Walk Devotional - The Navigators)

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Rabbi David A. Nelson likes to tell the story of two brothers who went to their rabbi to settle a longstanding feud. The rabbi got the two to reconcile their differences and shake hands. As they were about to leave, he asked each one to make a wish for the other in honor of the Jewish New Year. The first brother turned to the other and said, "I wish you what you wish me." At that, the second brother threw up his hands and said, "See, Rabbi, he's starting up again!"

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This headline appeared in the Grand Rapids Press: "Convict Tells of a Torture that Time Can't Change." The article described a newspaper reporter's interview with a man who had been convicted of killing his wife. Here's how the writer described the scene: "He leans forward from his chair. For a moment he says nothing. Finally he comments, matter-of-factly, 'I'll never be the same. I have no illusions about that. I still have to live with it.'" Since he was being considered for parole, the prisoner was asked by the reporter if he

deserved to be let out. He responded by saying, "Out? I lost a wife, and I can't replace her. It'll always be on my mind, because no matter what, I still bear the final responsibility. There's no amount of time I could do that would change anything. I could do 100 years or 1,000 years; how do you set a number for something like that?"

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When Narvaez, the Spanish patriot, lay dying, his father-confessor asked him whether he had forgiven all his enemies. Narvaez looked astonished and said, "Father, I have no enemies, I have shot them all."

Freud - "One must forgive one's enemies, but not before they've been hanged."

What a contrast with Abraham Lincoln - One of President Lincoln's associates scolded him rather severely for being soft on his enemies. "Why do you insist on trying to make friends of them?" he chided. "You should be trying to destroy them." To which Lincoln replied gently, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?"

Josh Billings - "There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness."

It is said of Samuel Johnson, the great English writer and lexicographer, that "the way to get a favor from him was to do him an injury." Evidently it was characteristic of him to forgive his enemies and pray for them.

Emerson said of Lincoln: "His heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong."

Spurgeon advised, "Cultivate forbearance until your heart yields a fine crop of it. Pray for a short memory as to all unkindness."

Philip the Good, when some of his courtiers would have persuaded him to punish a prelate who had used him ill, he declined, saying, "It is a fine thing to have revenge in one's power; but it is a finer thing not to use it."

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**THE POWER OF THE CROSS** - Before Louis XII became King of France he suffered great indignities and cruelties at the hand of his cousin Charles VIII. He was slandered, thrown into prison, kept in chains and constant fear of death.

When he succeeded his cousin to the throne, however, his close friends and advisers urged him to seek revenge for all these shameful atrocities. But Louis XII would not hear to any of the suggestions of these whisperers in his court. Instead they were amazed to see him preparing a list of all the names of men who had been guilty of crimes against himself. Behind each name they noticed he was placing a red cross.

His enemies, hearing of this list and the red cross placed behind each name by the king himself, were filled with dread alarm. They thought that the sign of a cross meant they were thereby sentenced to death on the gallows. One after the other they fled the court and their beloved country. But King Louis XII learning of their flight called for a special session of the court to explain his list of names and the little red crosses. "Be content, and do not fear," he said in a most cordial tone. "The cross which I drew by your names is not a sign of punishment, but a pledge of forgiveness and a seal for the sake of the crucified Savior, who upon His Cross forgave all His enemies, prayed for them, and blotted out the handwriting that was against them."

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"At last I understood: in the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. By forgiving another, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. By forgiving, I release my own right to get even and leave all issues of fairness for God to work out. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy." -- Philip Yancey, WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE?

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The Puritan John Owen said: "Our forgiving of others will not procure forgiveness for ourselves; but our not forgiving others proves that we ourselves are not forgiven." And Thomas Watson said: "A man may as well go to hell for not forgiving as for not believing." (Quoted in I.D.E. Thomas, The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977)

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Lamesa, Texan Don Nut says he and his wife have been married fifty years. He says that the secret is that they never went to bed without settling any differences between them. But Don concedes there have been times when he went ten days without sleep. -- Associated Press

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Recently, a survey was made of 200 married adults in regards to forgiveness. The researchers were wondering how one's ability to forgive others would affect their marital satisfaction and personal well-being. The research suggested that there is a huge relationship between marriage satisfaction and forgiveness. In fact, it appears that as much as one third of marriage satisfaction is related to forgiveness.

Not only does the ability to forgive impact the marriage relationship, it was significantly related to personal emotional distress. As forgiveness ability went up, individuals reported fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and fatigue. These results are powerful and

suggest that all counselors, both secular and faith-based, should be helping people develop the skill of forgiveness. - Peter J. Lawson, NEW FORGIVENESS RESEARCH, January 27, 2003; contributed By: Michael Raisbeck

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"Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness." - William Arthur Ward

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A group of Moravian missionaries once decided to take the message of God to the Eskimos. One of their struggles in teaching the Eskimos was that they could not find a word in the Eskimo language for forgiveness. Finally, they had to compound a phrase to use in the place of forgiveness. This compound phrase turned out to be *issumagijoujunnainermik*. It's a formidable looking assembly of letters, but the expression has a beautiful connotation for those who understand that it means "not being able to think about it anymore."

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What Forgiveness is Not:

- **FORGETTING:** deep hurts can rarely be wiped out of one's awareness.
  - **RECONCILIATION:** reconciliation takes two people, but an injured party can forgive an offender without reconciliation.
  - **CONDONING:** forgiveness does not necessarily excuse bad or hurtful behavior.
  - **DISMISSING:** forgiveness involves taking the offense seriously, not passing it off as inconsequential or insignificant.
  - **PARDONING:** a pardon is a legal transaction that releases an offender from the consequences of an action, such as a penalty. Forgiveness is a personal transaction that releases the one offended from the offense. - Adapted from Robert D. Enright
- 

A man who was telling his friend about an argument he'd had with his wife commented, "Oh, how I hate it, every time we have an argument; she gets historical."

The friend replied, "You mean hysterical."

"No," he insisted. "I mean historical. Every time we argue she drags up everything from the past and holds it against me!"

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**THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS** - A life filled with anger — a church full of angry people — is a pain to the Spirit (Ep 4:30<sup>note</sup>). He will not work, indeed cannot, for he abides by his own laws. The great evangelist D. L. Moody related a story which demonstrates this truth:

I remember one town that Mr. Sankey and I visited. For a week it seemed as if we were beating the air; there was no power in the meetings. At last, one day, I said that perhaps there was someone cultivating the **unforgiving spirit**. The chairman of our committee, who was sitting next to me, got up and left the meeting right in view of the audience. The arrow had hit the mark, and gone home to the heart of the chairman of the committee. He had had trouble with someone for about six months. He at once hunted up this man and asked him to forgive him. He came to me with tears in his eyes, and said: "I thank God you ever came here." That night the inquiry room was thronged.

We must deal with our anger for the sake of our own souls and the life of the Church. ([Hughes, R. K.: Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ. Crossway Books](#))

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Louis XII of France before coming to power had been severely mistreated by his enemies, and at one point was even placed into chains in prison. After his ascension to the throne of France, advisors urged him to seek revenge but he refused. Instead, what he did was even more amazing -- he had all of the names of those men who had injured or insulted him written on a scroll and after each man's name he placed a red cross. When his enemies heard what King Louis XII had done, they reasoned that they were marked men and feared for their lives, some even fleeing the country! The king responded by explaining that,

The cross which I drew beside each name was not a sign of punishment, but a pledge of forgiveness extended for the sake of the crucified Savior, who upon His cross forgave His enemies and prayed for them.

The King who had been thrown in a literal prison by enemies, refused to allow unforgiveness of those same enemies to keep him in

the spiritual bondage and torment that Jesus "promised" to those who refused to forgive (cp Mt 18:34, 35)!

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**From East To West** (Psalm 103:12) - How far is the east from the west? Where does the east end and the west begin? A certain state once had this slogan: "Where the west begins and the tall corn grows." The last part of the slogan is true; the first is not. No one knows where the west begins or where it ends. It's all a matter of where we ourselves are.

If I were in New York and wanted to travel as far west as possible, how far would I have to go? When I reach Los Angeles, the Philippines are still west, and after that China is still west, and from there Europe is west, and from Europe I go back to New York.

How far west must I go to reach the east? It cannot be measured.

Someone asked an elderly Christian, "Does the devil ever trouble you about your past sins?" She answered, "Yes." When asked what she does then, she replied, "Oh, I just tell him to go east." "What do you do if he comes back?" "I tell him to go west." "And when he comes back from the west, what do you do then?" She said, "I just keep him going from the east to the west."

Rejoice today, believer, that your sins are beyond the reach of man or demons. Because Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave, God removed your transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12). --M R De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Forever gone the sins Christ bore,  
His work is so complete,  
They'll be remembered nevermore;  
I worship at His feet. --Anon.

**When God saves us, our sins are forgiven and forgotten forever.**

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Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. —Matthew 5:44

During the war in Kosovo in 1999, three Americans were captured and held hostage for more than a month. After intense negotiations, a breakthrough occurred and the prisoners were allowed to go free.

Roy Lloyd was part of the delegation that secured their release. He reported, "Each of the three young soldiers was very religious. One of them, Christopher Stone, would not leave until he was allowed to go back to the soldier who served as his guard and pray for him."

Here was a young man who knew something about the principles of Jesus. He could have resented his circumstances and hated his captors. He could have developed a bitter, vengeful spirit. He could have carried a burning rage out of that difficulty. But following the command of Jesus (Matthew 5:44) and the example of Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:25-34), he forgave his captor and ministered to him.

In a world where retaliation is common, believers are called to be different. We are to pray for our persecutors, forgive them, and minister to them.

Jesus' principles for His followers are challenging, but with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us we can choose to have a forgiving spirit. —D C Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**For Further Study:**

Why should we forgive? (Matthew 6:14, 15).

Whom should we forgive? (Luke 17:3, 4).

How can we forgive? (Galatians 5:16, 22, 23, 24, 25).

We are never more Christlike than when we choose to forgive.

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Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS), the flying department of Wycliffe Bible Translators--had flown thousands of hours over a 25 year span without one fatal accident before April 7, 1972. On that day, a Piper Aztec lost its right engine and crashed in Papua New Guinea, killing all seven persons aboard. The Aztec had just rolled out of the Wycliffe maintenance hangar the day before following a 100 hour inspection. The chief mechanic was stunned when he heard the news of the crash. Reviewing in his mind each step he had performed in inspecting that right engine, he suddenly recoiled in horror. He remembered that he had been interrupted

while tightening a fuel line and had never returned to finish the job! That faulty connection had allowed raw fuel to spray out and catch fire while the Aztec was in flight. The mechanic's guilt at being responsible for the deaths of his companions crushed him. For days he did not know what to do. The other mechanics tried to help him, as did his own family. But when the family of Doug Hunt, the pilot who was killed in the accident, was preparing to return to their home in New Zealand, the mechanic knew he had to see them, talk with them and beg their forgiveness. He could barely get out the words as he sobbed in their presence. "That hand there," he said, looking at his right hand, "took Doug's life." Glennis Hunt, Doug's widow, embraced him. "Glennis sat by me and held the hand that took her husband's life," he later wrote, "and another JAARS pilot sat on my other side with a demonstration of love, comfort, and forgiveness. That was the most significant first step in the healing process." ([Max Lucado, God Came Near, Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 101](#)).

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When Dwight Lyman Moody died on December 22, 1899, Reuben Archer Torrey was Superintendent of the Moody Bible Institute and pastor of the Chicago Avenue Church (now Moody Church), both founded under the leadership and direction of the dynamic Moody. Thomas DeWitt Talmage, the fiery pulpiter and author/editor, had just retired from his pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.

Unknown to most people, the two men - both with dominant, unbending personalities - had experienced a falling out some time previously. When Talmage learned of Moody's death, and knowing that his mantle would fall on Torrey, he immediately sat down and penned the latter a note. In it, he expressed regret for being such a poor Christian as to allow their differences to separate them for years, confessed his own fault in the matter, and begged Torrey's forgiveness. No one else, apparently, knew about it.

Years later, when J. Vernon McGee was pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, where Torrey had gone after leaving the work in Chicago, he found Talmage's letter in an old file and reported it on his nationwide radio program, "Thru the Bible." We assume Torrey accepted the apology and made one of his own, so both got it taken care of prior to the Bema Seat. At least Talmage, we know, got his part settled here rather than there.

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In the Talmud Jewish Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda taught that a man was to be forgiven three times: "If a man transgresses one time, forgive him. If a man transgresses two times, forgive him. If a man transgresses three times, forgive him. If a man transgresses four times, do not forgive him." This teaching is probably taken from Amos 1:3 and Amos 2:1

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Many years ago, Pastor Stuart Briscoe visited a mission in a remote, primitive area. He spent the night in the hut of the local "witch" doctor. Overhead, Briscoe noticed a variety of small objects hanging from the ceiling. The missionary informed him that each object represented some offense the villagers had committed against the doctor or his family. If someone spoke unkindly of the doctor, he would hang up an object representing that person's unkind words.

Forgiveness was not an option. In fact, the doctor hung those objects from the ceiling so that as he lay in bed each night, he could count the objects and remind himself of each person's offense. In this way, he was continually replaying his grievances. -- Jill Briscoe, HeartStrings

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Ruth Bell Graham - A good marriage is the union of two forgivers.

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When the books of a certain Scottish doctor were examined after his death, it was found that a number of accounts were crossed through with a note: "Forgiven -- too poor to pay." But the physician's wife later decided that these accounts must be paid in full and she proceeded to sue for money. When the case came to court the judge asked but one question. Is this your husband's handwriting? When she replied that it was he responded: "There is no court in the land that can obtain a debt once the word forgiven has been written."

And that is the good news that the Gospel offers us this morning. God's attitude is not "I'll forgive but I won't forget," but rather, "Forgiven, Forgotten Forever." Across our debt has been written the words, "Forgiven -- too poor to pay." Once a debt has been cancelled there is no one who can collect on it. God wipes it out of his mind. Oh, if we could only do that. If we could forgive others like that; if we could forgive ourselves like that.

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**A "Byte" of Humor** (Pun Intended) - Author **Gary Inrig** (The Parables. Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1991 - I highly recommend anything he has written!) tells of a man bitten by a dog later discovered to be rabid. Hospital tests confirmed that the man had contracted rabies and his fate was sealed. The doctor was forced to relay the bad news declaring to his doomed patient...

Sir, everything possible will be done to make you comfortable, but we can't offer any false hope. My best advice to you is to put your affairs in order as soon as possible.

The dying man sank back in depression and shock, but finally rallied enough strength to ask for a pen and paper. He began writing furiously. When the doctor returned, the man was still writing what the doctor assumed was his will and said...

Well, it's good to see you've taken my advice. I take it you're working on your will.

To which the patient quipped...

This ain't no will, Doc. It's a list of people I plan on bitin' before I die!"

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Forbearance! Forgiveness! (in Col 3:13-note) Here is the grave of all of our squabbles. In the home, at work, on the playing field, and in the church we are called upon to exhibit the spirit of the Lord Jesus. In one of his sermons, D. L. Moody used to picture the Lord's saying to Peter, "Go, hunt up the man who put the crown of thorns on My head and tell him that I love him. Tell him that he can have a crown in my kingdom, one without a thorn. Find the man who spat in my face and preach the gospel to him. Tell him that I forgive him and that I died to save him. Find the man who thrust the spear into my side and tell him that there is a quicker way to my heart." That is how the Lord Jesus has forgiven us. Now it is our turn. We are to forgive others and make an end of our quarrels. The Greek word occurs only here and means "grievances." ([Phillips, John: Exploring Colossians: An Expository Commentary](#))

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**UNABLE TO FORGIVE FROM THE HEART** - One scholar has said that when Andrew Jackson hated, it often became a grand passion. He could hate with a Biblical fury. He would resort to petty and vindictive acts to nurture his hatred and keep it bright and strong and ferocious. He needed revenge. He always struck back.

On May 30, 1806, Jackson met crackshot Charles Dickinson in a duel at Harrison's Mills, Kentucky. It appears that Dickinson had made some rude comments about Jackson's wife. Others had too- she wasn't actually divorced when Jackson married her.

So that morning they paced off for the duel. Upon the signal to "Fire!," Dickinson instantly raised his pistol and, as expected, got off the first shot. Kicking up dust from Jackson's coat as it entered, the bullet stuck him full in the chest. Everyone watching knew that Jackson had been hit. Astonishingly, Jackson did not fall but remained standing, ramrod straight. The 70-caliber ball had chipped off his breastbone, broken two ribs, plowed through chest muscle to come within an inch of his heart. Blood drained down his leg and began to fill his boot.

Dumbfounded, Dickinson had to remain on his mark to await his fate. He was now at Jackson's mercy.

A man in Jackson's situation customarily raised his pistol, aimed it at his disarmed opponent, then pointed it at the sky and fired. It was the gentlemanly thing to do and earned you much respect. Dickinson stood frozen, his arms folded across his chest, his eyes fixed on the ground. Jackson raised his pistol, took level aim - and pulled the trigger. A harmless "click" followed. The hammer had mercifully failed to strike.

Jackson now had a second chance to consider his actions, to remind himself that Dickinson's wife was pregnant. Jackson himself was born after his father's death and knew the hardship of growing up fatherless on the frontier. As Dickinson waited helplessly in place, Jackson carefully recocked his pistol and again took deliberate aim at his opponent. And for the second time he pulled the trigger. This time the weapon did not misfire, and Dickinson fell mortally wounded. Jackson showed no remorse for having shot Dickinson in cold blood.

The episode would haunt Jackson the rest of his life. The full ounce of lead was lodged so close to his heart that doctors never dared to try to remove it. Thereafter he experienced sporadic chest pain that increased with old age.

During his first presidential campaign in 1828, the opposition compiled a list of his brutality and printed a handbill with 18 coffins on it. Each had the name of an individual killed by Jackson's gun or order. His harshness and inability to forgive almost cost him the presidency, not to mention his life.

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**HOW MANY BERRY SPOONS DO YOU POSSESS?** - "I'll never forgive him. I told him I would never forgive him." The attractive elderly lady spoke softly, but with resolve, to the night nurse. Her expression was troubled as she turned away, focusing her eyes on the drape closing in her nursing home bed. The conversation had traveled from the temporal to the eternal and now a deep hurt had surfaced.

She told of how her brother had approached her hospital bed, accusing her of taking more than her share of family heirlooms following their mother's death. He spoke of various items, ending with "the berry spoon." He said, "I want the berry spoon." For the 40 years since the parent's death he had hidden his feelings, and now they erupted. She was both hurt and angered by his accusation and vowed never to forgive him. "It's my spoon. It was given to me," she defended herself. "He's wrong and I won't forgive him."

A berry spoon. In the bed lay a woman given two months to live-60 days-and she would face eternity and never see her brother again in this life. Her mind and spirit were in anguish, and her only remaining family tie was broken over a spoon.

How many berry spoons are there in our lives? How many things, as insignificant as a spoon, in light of eternity, separate us from full communion with God? How much lack of forgiveness keeps us from fellowship with others?

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Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, once said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day! ([Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute](#))

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On the Lord's day a group of missionaries and believers in New Guinea were gathered together to observe the Lord's Supper. After one young man sat down, a missionary recognized that a sudden tremor had passed through the young man's body that indicated he was under a great nervous strain. Then in a moment all was quiet again. The missionary whispered, "What was it that troubled you?" "Ah," he said, "But the man who just came in killed and ate the body of my father. And now he has come in to remember the Lord with us. At first I didn't know whether I could endure it. But it is all right now. He is washed in the same precious blood." And so together they had Communion. It is a marvelous thing, the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Does the world know anything of this? (H. A. Ironside)

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Missy Jenkins has just released an extraordinary book. If her name doesn't ring a bell, what happened to her probably will. On Dec. 1, 1997, a 14-year-old classmate of Missy's shot her at school. In the rampage, three students were killed and five were injured. Missy's injuries caused her to become paralyzed and placed her in a wheel chair. In her book, *I Choose to be Happy*, she tells of forgiving her attacker. She even met with him personally in prison. What gave her the courage to forgive? She attributes it to her faith. She believes that the forgiving lead to her healing. In an interview promoting the book, she said of forgiveness, "It released me from being angry. Being angry holds you down. It causes you to be tired...So I just chose to be happy and move on with my life. I thought it was the best way to help me heal, physically and emotionally." (Preaching.com)

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In a dream, Martin Luther found himself being attacked by Satan. The devil unrolled a long scroll containing a list of Luther's sins, and held it before him. On reaching the end of the scroll Luther asked the devil, "Is that all?" "No," came the reply, and a second scroll was thrust in front of him. Then, after a second came a third. But now the devil had no more. "You've forgotten something," Luther exclaimed triumphantly. "Quickly write on each of them, 'The blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sins.'" ([Kurt Koch](#))

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**Helen Grace Lesheid writing on on bitterness** - It grows. It distorts reality. It keeps us chained to the past. Like bad air, it pollutes not just the bitter person, but those who come in contact with the person (cp He 12:15-note). (Breaking Free from Bitterness - Discipleship Journal, Vol 14, No. 6, Nov/Dec 1994)

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**Don't Emulate Old Miss Havisham** - "Perhaps the best caricature of the power of resentment was penned by the author Charles Dickens in his novel *Great Expectations*. There we meet the immortal character Miss Havisham, jilted at the altar many years before. Long ago, she was dressing for her wedding, waiting for the hour of nine when her groom would arrive and the blessed event would begin. The immense wedding cake, along with a sumptuous feast, lay in wait. At precisely ten minutes before nine, a message arrived. The groom would not be coming; he had run away with another woman. At that moment, time had ceased to move forward in the mansion of Miss Havisham. Every clock in the house registered ten minutes to nine from that day on. Neither did old Miss Havisham's wardrobe ever change: she still wore the wedding dress and the veil, now faded, yellowed with age and tattered. The windows of the ruined mansion stayed heavily draped so that sunshine might never enter. For decades the cake and the feast had rotted on the tables, mostly carried off by rats and spiders. The rats could be heard behind the wall panels. **'Sharper teeth than those of the rats have been gnawing on me,'** (cp Mt 18:34) said Miss Havisham. And of course she was right. The teeth of resentment cut sharp and deep, and can lay waste to the life that God designed as a feast and a celebration of abundant living (Jn 10:10)." ([David Jeremiah, Slaying the Giants in Your Life. Nashville, Tn: W Publishing Group, 2001](#))

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**The Power of Unforgiveness/Forgiveness** - When Leonardo da Vinci was painting the "Last Supper," he had an intense, bitter argument with a fellow painter. Leonardo was so enraged that he decided to paint the face of his enemy into the face of Judas. That way the hated painter's face would be preserved for ages in the face of the betraying disciple. When Leonardo finished Judas, everyone easily recognized the face of the painter with whom Leonardo quarreled. Leonardo continued to work on the painting. But as much as he tried, he could not paint the face of Christ. Something was holding him back. Leonardo decided his hatred toward his fellow painter was the problem. So he worked through his hatred by repainting Judas' face, replacing the image of his fellow painter with another face. Only then was he able to paint Jesus' face and complete the masterpiece.

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**Arthur Balfour** said that...

The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.

**GEORGE HERBERT**

He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.

**Francis Bacon** wrote that...

This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.

**George Sweeting** told the following story...

When Andrew Jackson was being interviewed for church membership, the pastor said,

"General, there is one more question which I must ask you. Can you forgive all your enemies?"

Andrew Jackson was silent as he recalled his stormy life of bitter fighting. Then he responded,

"My political enemies I can freely forgive; but as for those who attacked me for serving my country and those who slandered my wife—Doctor, I cannot forgive them!"

The pastor made it clear to Jackson that before he could become a member of that church and partake of the broken bread and the cup his hatred and bitterness must be confessed and dealt with before God. Again there was an awkward silence. Then Jackson affirmed that if God would help him, he would forgive his enemies.

**Henry Ward Beecher** wrote that...

Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note—torn in two and burned up, so that it never can be shown against one.

God pardons like a mother, who kisses the offense into everlasting forgiveness.

"I can forgive, but I cannot forget," is only another way of saying, "I cannot forgive."

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A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression. **Proverbs 19:11**

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles **Proverbs 24:17**

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**BURYING THE HATCHET** - Old Joe was dying. For years he had been at odds with Bill, formerly one of his best friends. Wanting to straighten things out, he sent word for Bill to come and see him. When Bill arrived, Joe told him that he was afraid to go into eternity with such a bad feeling between them. Then, very reluctantly and with great effort, Joe apologized for things he had said and done. He also assured Bill that he **forgave him** for his offenses. Everything seemed fine until Bill turned to go. As he walked out of the room, Joe called out after him, "But, remember, if I get better, this doesn't count!"

We may smile at this story. Yet what a clear picture this gives of the way we sometimes treat one another. The forgiveness we profess is often superficial (Ed: Not from the heart, Mt 18:35, Ezek 36:26, 27). It may be prompted by fear, or to gain some selfish advantage, or to clear our conscience--not out of genuine love for God (cf Lk 7:41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47) and the one who has wronged us. Yes, we may say we forgive, but when the least little friction arises, we are quick to resurrect past grievances (cf God's forgiveness - Isa 38:7, 44:22, Mic 7:19). In short, **we like to "bury the hatchet" with the handle sticking out.** That way we can easily pick it up again and use it to our advantage. How different is the forgiveness Jesus talked about! (Mt 18:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

If our sinless Lord is willing to forgive us--with all our faults--how can we withhold pardon from those who have sinned against us? True Christlike forgiveness buries the hatchet completely.

Those who say they will forgive but can't forget,  
simply bury the hatchet but leave the handle out for immediate use.

--D. L. Moody

Every man should have a fair-sized cemetery  
in which to bury the faults of his friends.

**--Henry Ward Beecher**

Christ the Lord our debt has paid—  
All our sins on Him were laid;  
We like Him should try to live,  
Always ready to forgive! —Bosch

**To resent and remember brings strife;  
To forgive and forget brings peace.**

**For Further Thought - What happens to your fellowship with God when you hold a grudge? (Mt 6:15-note). Can you think of someone you need to forgive?**

For Further Thought - **What happens to your fellowship with God when you hold a grudge?** (see Mt 6:15-note). **Can you think of someone you need to forgive? If not would you be willing to pray David's heart searching plea in Ps 139:23, 24?** Forgiveness (releasing the "debt" the other party owes you) will "cost" you -- you will have to deny self (Mk 8:34), to deny "your rights" (Php 2:4-note), something that you can only do after you have presented your body (everything - spirit, soul, mind, emotions, will, etc) to God as a holy sacrifice, for then His Spirit will enable you by grace to freely forgive for the glory of your Father in heaven.

**Garth Brooks** has a song which speaks of the unforgiving heart...

**We bury the hatchet  
But leave the handle stickin' out**  
We're always diggin' up things  
We should forget about  
When it comes to forgettin'  
Baby, there ain't no doubt  
We bury the hatchet  
But leave the handle sticking out

-Garth Brooks, "[We Bury The Hatchet](#)"  
on the Album: Ropin The Wind

One great obstacle of stumbling is non-forgiveness. The hatchet might seem to be buried, but people continue to grab hold of the handle when they want to use it against another. Jesus said if a brother repents, forgive him-that is, bury the hatchet and its handle. How many times, you might ask? As often as the brother repents, we are to forgive (Lk 17:3, 4- where "forgive" = **aphiemi [word study]** meaning release him, cancel his debt, let it go!). Don't grab hold of buried hatchet handles, for they become stumbling blocks to forgiveness.

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Thomas A. Edison was working on a crazy contraption called a "light bulb" and it took a whole team of men 24 straight hours to put just one together. The story goes that when Edison was finished with one light bulb, he gave it to a young boy helper, who nervously carried it up the stairs. Step by step he cautiously watched his hands, obviously frightened of dropping such a priceless piece of work. You've probably guessed what happened by now; the poor young fellow dropped the bulb at the top of the stairs. It took the entire team of men twenty-four more hours to make another bulb. Finally, tired and ready for a break, Edison was ready to have his bulb carried up the stairs. He gave it to the same young boy who dropped the first one. That's true forgiveness. ([James Newton, Uncommon Friends](#))

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Button in a tourist shop: to err is human, to forgive is out of the question.

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Opaquing fluid is the magical liquid that covers over your errors, your typos, your unfortunate slip-ups. You brush on the liquid and start all over again--hopefully this time with no unfortunate slip-ups. Opaquing fluid is forgiveness, an obliteration of a goof with no telltale traces that the goof happened at all. ([John V Chervokas, How to Keep God Alive from 9 to 5](#))

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The art of forgiving is a spiritual grace every Christian should develop. Because this is so difficult to put into practice, he offers the following suggestions:

- 1) Begin by assuring yourself that compared to Christ's suffering you haven't been seriously wronged at all.
- 2) Recall the many kind deeds that have been shown to you, perhaps even by the person who has harmed you.
- 3) List the benefits you have received from the Lord (Ed: E.g., Ps 103:12, Isa 38:17, Isa 44:22, Mic 7:19, to list a few of the metaphors that give us a faint picture of the Father's infinite, eternal forgiveness!).
- 4) Thank Him for blessing you with His love and forgiveness each day.
- 5) Make an honest effort to pray for the one who has injured you.
- 6) Go even further by looking for an opportunity to help him.
- 7) If the offense is especially hard to forget, try to erase the memory by thinking gracious and generous thoughts.
- 8) Finally, before you fall asleep at night, repeat slowly and thoughtfully that phrase from the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Roy L. Smith)

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**NO FEAR OF THE FIRE OF CONDEMNATION** - Some people try to punish themselves for their sins. They do not stand on the promises of forgiveness and Christ' propitiation. "Many years ago, a father and his daughter were walking through the grass on the Canadian prairie. In the distance, they saw a prairie fire, and they realized that it would soon engulf them. The father knew there was only one way of escape: They would quickly begin a fire right where they were and burn a large patch of grass. When the huge fire drew near, they then would stand on the section that had already burned. When the flames did approach them, the girl was terrified but her father assured her, 'The flames can't get to us. We are standing where the fire has already been.'" ([Erwin Lutzer, Failure, The Back Door to Success](#))

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#### **Related Resources:** Forgive/Forgiveness

- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Ephesians 4:32
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Colossians 3:13
- Exposition of "Forgiveness" in Matthew 6:12 and Matthew 6:14-15.
- Illustrations and quotes on forgiveness

#### **NT words for forgive/forgiveness:**

- Forgiveness ([859](#)) aphesis
- Forgive (send away from, cancel the debt, release, let go) ([863](#)) aphiemai
- Forgive (grant, freely give, bestow) ([5483](#)) charizomai

**Excellent 5 Part Sermon Series on Forgiveness by Dr Ray Pritchard:** following messages are also in his book - **The Healing Power of Forgiveness** ([see reviews by readers](#))

- [1\) Forgiveness Healing the Hurt We Never Deserved](#)
- [2\) Forgiveness and the Lord's Prayer](#)
- [3\) Judge Not!](#)
- [4\) Is Total Forgiveness Realistic](#)
- [5\) The Final Step-Blessing Your Enemies](#)

#### **Other Resources on Forgiveness**

- [Father, Forgive Them by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Forgiving the Unforgivable by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [How Can I Learn to Forgive? by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Unless You Forgive by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Forgiving the Unforgivable article by Dr. Ray Pritchard](#)
- [Forgiveness of Injuries \(Mt 18:21-22\) by John Angell James](#)
- [Forgiveness of Sins by Henry Law - 17 Chapter Treatise!](#)