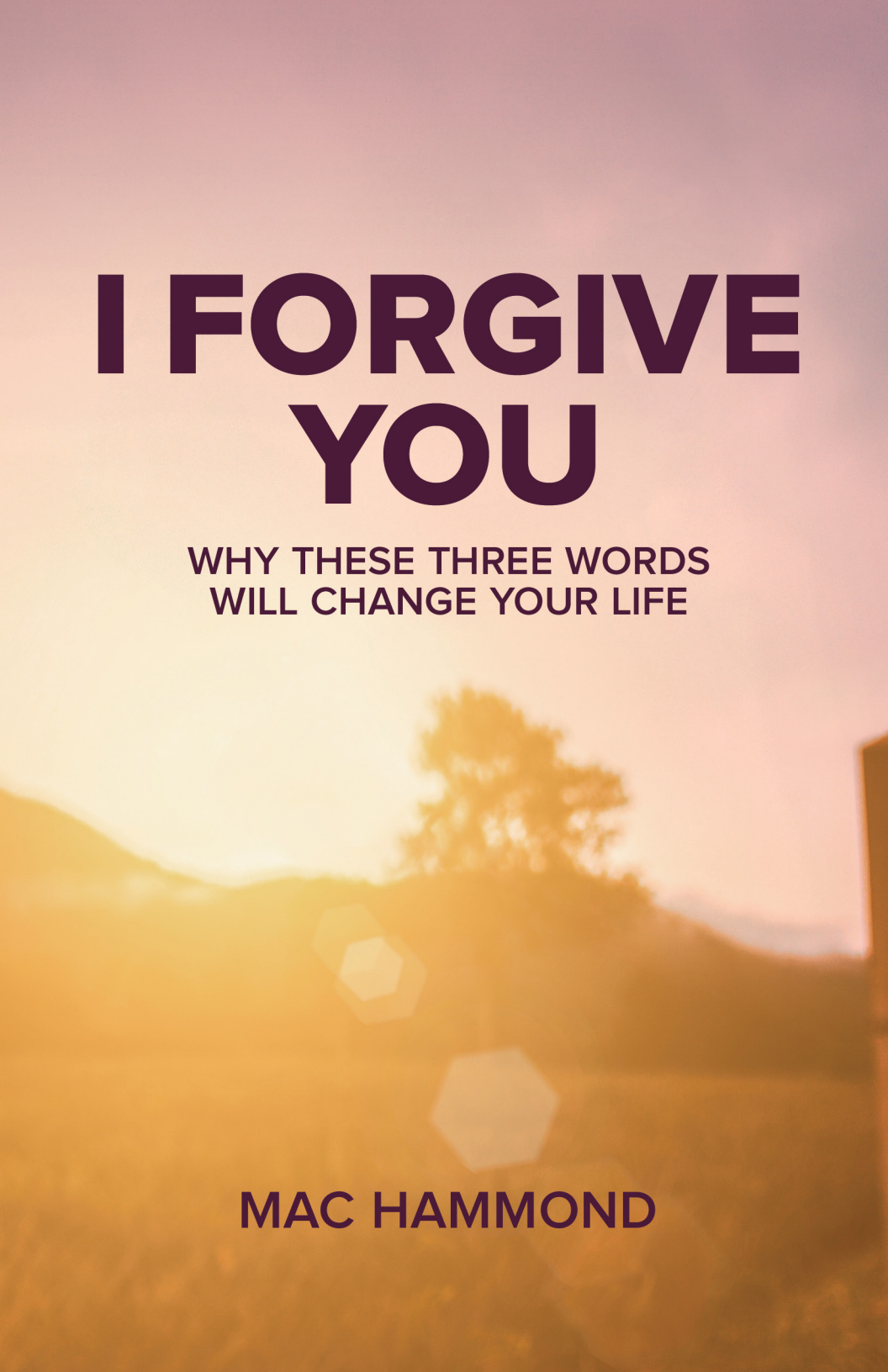

I FORGIVE YOU
WHY THESE THREE WORDS WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE
MAC HAMMOND

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WRONGDOING CAN’T BE ERASED AND THE PAST CAN’T CHANGE, BUT YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR FUTURE.

Tweet this. @machammondmin #Forgive

Chapter 1

THE VALUE OF FORGIVENESS

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and
discover that the prisoner was you.
– Lewis B. Smedes

Last-minute schedule changes. A word spoken in haste. The wrong tone of voice. So many things can upset our days and tempt us to hold a grudge. If we're not careful, these moments of frustration can become weapons of personal warfare we lord over others in an attempt to show our superiority—for we weren't the ones acting horribly. They were.

However, no list of excuses is enough reason to hold onto petty inconveniences and misunderstandings. They will only nag us the rest of our lives if we don't deal with them properly.

How do we do that? We must learn how to forgive.

Forgiveness opens us up to experience joy in this life that cannot happen when we carry anger, bitterness, and resentment in our hearts. We must choose to forgive.

Now, here's the difficult part: forgiveness should extend past small mistakes and misbeliefs. We should extend it even to those who have hurt us deeply. Everything from physical and emotional abuse to manipulation and infidelity need to be forgiven if we ever want to walk fully in physical, emotional, and relational health.

That's what this book is about. Let this be your handbook on how and why we need to forgive, for there are many considerations surrounding forgiveness that need to be addressed. We don't forgive others so they can continue abusing us, and we don't hold a grudge in order to hurt others. We forgive so both those who hurt and those who have been hurt can walk the path of freedom.

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Now, forgiving people who have hurt you is never easy. In fact, it is often much more gratifying to sit and stew over how others have wronged you. What people don't realize, though, is that forgiveness is for your benefit just as much as the benefit of the person who hurt you.

Here's why: 99% of all good things you and I will ever receive in life are going to come through a single channel: relationships. If you stew in bitterness or hold a grudge, you close off that avenue of blessing through which God can work.

You see, when God wants to encourage you, you don't hear a booming voice from heaven saying, "Be thou encouraged, My child." He sends someone to put an arm around you and say a few words that turn your day around. When God wants to increase you financially, a giant hand doesn't come out of the clouds to drop a bag of money in your lap. God uses an employer to give you a promotion or someone you know to send you a surprise gift. God brings good things into your life by using the people around you to deliver them.

In order for this to happen, though, you must keep this pathway of blessing open. Misunderstandings and conflict will come, but resolution and forgiveness is possible, for that is what creates and sustains healthy relationships.

THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF FORGIVENESS

The Bible is filled with Scriptures about the importance of forgiveness. Take a look:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (Colossians 3:12–13)

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. (Luke 17:3–4)

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (Matthew 6:12)

> *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:14–15)

Over and over, the Lord commands us to forgive.

What does forgiveness look like? When you forgive someone, you pardon or release that person from some obligation or indebtedness to you. That debt may be either real or perceived. Here are some examples:

- Spouses walk into marriage with a list of expectations that are based on everything from their perspective of life to the Bible's commands. If spouses aren't aware, unmet expectations can become debts that they hold over each other's heads.

- Perceived offenses are common when misunderstanding prevails and you expect others to apologize for something they didn't realize happened.

- Legal or financial debts can be either upheld or forgiven.

- When you do something nice for someone and that person doesn't return the favor, you could easily hold onto that debt and allow seeds of bitterness to fester.

Whatever the reason, when you withhold blessing from people because they haven't fulfilled an obligation to you, unforgiveness is at work.

THE MASSIVE DEBT WE OWED

If people knew how deadly unforgiveness was, they'd think twice before holding a grudge. Jesus used a parable in Matthew chapter 18 to illustrate the spiritual poison of unforgiveness.

> *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.* (Matthew 18:23–27)

"Ten thousand talents" doesn't refer to an exact amount. Instead, it presents the idea that this servant owed what was equivalent to millions, even billions, of dollars in today's terms. Ultimately, however, the cost didn't matter, for the servant owed a massive, unpayable debt.

Imagine for a moment the relief that servant felt when the king pardoned him. He no longer had to envision a life of worry and fear, dogged by his debt. He no longer owed his income to someone else, and he could use the reward of his labor to build something new.

Now, let's make this even more practical. This servant's debt is a snapshot of the debt we owed our Lord. We didn't have the capacity to make amends for our sins or repay what we owed, but the Lord had compassion on us. He didn't just extend the terms of our debt; He sent Jesus to pay for our freedom so He could forgive us completely from our indebtedness.

What a relief that we can live a life of freedom because of Jesus!

SHARE THE FREEDOM WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN

Now watch what the servant in Jesus' story does next.

> *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts* [that's a key phrase] *forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* (Matthew 18:28–35)

"An hundred pence" was significantly less than the 10,000 talents. This fellow servant may have had to work for a few months or so to gather the funds, but repaying the debt would be possible. Therefore, one would assume that transferring the forgiveness he had just received from the king to his fellow servant would be the best option for this servant to choose, but he didn't do that. He dared to assume that forgiveness could only be given to him.

In the same way, we owed God an unpayable debt, yet He forgave us. We should turn around and release others from debts they owe us. When we don't, it looks as dishonorable and foolish as the servant in this parable. God wants us to free others from debts they owe us so they can walk in the same freedom we have been granted from God.

REVENGE ISN'T SWEET

Now, many people hold a grudge to protect their hearts; others stay bitter in hopes it would somehow destroy the person who initially hurt them. The reality, though, is that bitterness will never bring satisfaction. Ultimately, it only harms the person who chooses to remain bitter.

Matthew chapter 18 specifies that the consequence of not forgiving is that you will be tormented the balance of your life on this earth. Now, it's not the will of God that you have a negative experience on earth, but He wants you to realize how serious unforgiveness is. Unforgiveness will torment you. It will drag you down mentally and emotionally and keep you stuck in a place of frustration.

You won't be able to move further in that relationship—or any other relationship—if you hold onto grudges and allow bitterness to rule. Here's why: when you choose to avoid forgiveness in one area of your life, that bitter feeling will spill over into other areas. You won't always be able to identify the root cause of the frustration, but I can guarantee that if you allow unforgiveness to fester, it will hurt you in other areas of life.

Even more importantly, as Jesus pointed out in this parable, unforgiveness is serious because when you refuse to forgive, you are essentially saying that the blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover your sin and debt to the Lord, but it isn't sufficient to cover what another person did to you. When you do that, you have demeaned the value you place on the blood of the Lamb. As a result, that blood will not make amends for what you have done to wrong the Lord, and therefore, you'll live in the consequence of your sin.

That's where the torment comes from. It's not so much the Lord's doing. You have done it to yourself. You have rejected the blood of Jesus Christ as adequate to cover the mistakes someone else has made and therefore unwittingly for your own. You will live in the torment that unremitted sin will bring into your own life.

UNFORGIVENESS DISABLES FAITH

We see something else about unforgiveness in Mark 11:24–26.

> *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your*

trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Do you see why this is such a serious thing? Unforgiveness harms relationships, hinders relational growth, and disables your faith. It affects everything in your life; it cannot be allowed to stay.

Now, this doesn't mean that forgiveness lets someone off the hook. It doesn't. Forgiveness cannot change what happened in the past, but forgiveness does enable your future to be better and relationships to heal.

I encourage you to forgive, not in word only but also in your heart, those who have wronged you or are indebted to you in some regard. When forgiveness is more than words, it opens you to a God-given freedom that is available no other way.



BE PATIENT AS YOU PURSUE HEALING IN YOUR RELATION-SHIPS.

Tweet this. @machammondmin #Forgive

”

CHOOSE KINDNESS OVER SHAME AND CHOOSE NOT TO BLAME.

Tweet this. @machammondmin #Forgive



DON'T USE SHAME AND BLAME AS WEAPONS TO GET YOUR WAY.

Tweet this. @machammondmin #Forgive

Chapter 2

FORGIVE... THEN FORGET

Forgiveness is not an occasional act;
it is a constant attitude.
– Martin Luther King Jr.

Forgiveness from the heart doesn't stop with confession. God takes the definition of forgiveness one step further.

Let's look at this in Isaiah 43:25. The Lord is speaking and He says:

> *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

When you remember something, you choose to put it in your mind. You choose to consider it. Alternatively, when you are going to "not remember" something, you choose not to think about it or allow it to come into your mind. That's what the Lord does for us. He chooses not to remember our sins.

Notice that God said He's blotted out your transgressions for His own sake, not yours. If He's going to be able to forgive you and have the relationship with you He wants, He can't be mindful of what you did. If this is true for the Lord, do you think this is going to be true for us? It absolutely will be.

Forgiveness extends to our thought processes and what we allow ourselves to remember about other people. After we forgive

others, we need to forget what they have done and move on. I'm not talking about supernatural brainwashing. I am talking about choosing not to think about past sins or mistakes.

Now the temptation to replay negative thoughts will come time and again. If you're not careful, those thoughts will stay and work your emotions into a bundle. You will have to take charge of your thought life. You'll have to watch where your attention goes when you think about someone who has hurt you. When you focus your attention on all the things that are objectionable to you about that person, forgiveness won't have the chance to stay. You'll instead wallow in bitterness and anger. If you want to forgive—and stay in that place of forgiveness—you can't allow negative thoughts to stay in your head. You'll need to make a point to think positively.

As you deliberately choose forgiveness on a daily basis, you'll enable yourself to heal and the relationship to grow. This isn't something you can do without help; turn to God and ask Him to help you stop meditating on what happened. He is always willing and available to help you choose to live freely!

WHEN FORGETTING BECOMES CONDITIONAL

I've had people at this point come to me and say, "Pastor, you do not know what you're asking. How could I ever forgive and forget what happened to me?"

I don't know your specific situation, but I do know that some of the things people need to forgive others for are truly horrible. I

also know that doesn't change your need to forgive. No matter how badly they may have done you wrong, the blood of Jesus is sufficient to redeem them just as surely as it is sufficient to redeem you. You must forgive and forget.

Now, you cannot forget a wrong done to you when the other person hasn't asked for your forgiveness. You can forgive that person and release yourself from holding onto frustration and bitterness, but you cannot act as though the other person has turned from the sin if that person hasn't yet chosen to do so. For example, if a woman is being abused, she can forgive her abuser and choose to not be bitter, but she should not forget what has been done to her. She should be wary and cautious and not step back into the same environment as if nothing has happened. Forgetting sin when an abuser hasn't repented enables abuse to continue.

That is not the Bible. Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12 both say, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished." Until abusers recognize the wrongness of their actions and repent, the abused can't forget about what's been happening or the abused will keep getting hurt.

So how do we handle a situation where someone needs to repent for hurting you? Luke 17:3 says:

> *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."*

A process needs to unfold after an offense occurs: You confront. They repent. You forgive.

It is good to note that Luke chapter 17 is talking about Christians. It's not talking about the world in general because it uses the word "brother." Also, the word "rebuke" is a little strong; approach someone who has offended you humbly and respectfully so the other person can respond and say, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that. Would you forgive me?"

Then, like I've said, once repentance has occurred, extend forgiveness by forgetting about it. Don't bring it up again. The next time there's a little heat in a conversation, don't throw that out there and say, "You know what you did before." Purposefully choose not to think about it again once you've forgiven someone. That's the path to embracing true freedom.

Chapter 3

WHAT ABOUT "TURN THE OTHER CHEEK"?

Vulnerability is optional. Trust is optional.
Relationships are optional. And forgiveness is optional.
This is why forgiveness remains a miraculously,
powerful moment every time it happens.
– Scott Savage

When I first preached this message on forgiveness at my church, a lot of "what if" and "what about this" questions surfaced from the congregation. I realized that one of the things that plagues the body of Christ is we don't know when to forgive. One segment of Christianity is too stubborn to forgive; the other segment forgives everything that moves. Neither of these are correct attitudes.

The people in the second category often base their decision to forgive anyone and everyone on Matthew 5:38–41.

> *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

People read this and assume Christians need to "turn the other cheek" and forgive everybody. The problem is, when they do this, evil walks all over them, and God certainly doesn't want evil walking all over His children! Romans 12:21 says:

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Wait a minute. Matthew chapter 5 tells us to resist not evil, but Romans tells us to overcome it. Did the Lord get His doctrine wrong?

Of course not. When you run into seeming contradictions like this in the Word, it's important that you step back and look at the bigger picture. In this case, throughout the Old Covenant and New, we see verses that agree with Romans 12:21 that say we are not only to resist evil but to overcome it. On the other hand, Matthew 5:39 is the only instance where we're told not to resist evil: that means it must have a fairly narrow range of application.

What would that application be? Well, the verse is set within Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This sermon occurred after the multitudes had departed from Jesus and His disciples. That means He wasn't giving general counsel to the body of Christ or proposing what the New Covenant was going to include in the way we conduct ourselves under it. The Sermon on the Mount was directed to Jesus' disciples, the people entrusted with taking the Gospel to all of the world.

Even though many of the principles in that sermon do apply to every Christian, much of what we see has to do more specifically with conduct of ministry. In the case of the admonition to "turn

the other cheek," we can look at the example of Jesus. When Jesus went to the cross, He went as an innocent lamb to the slaughter. He "turned the other cheek" while He was persecuted for the Gospel's sake. That means if you are standing on a street corner preaching the Gospel and somebody slaps you, you don't defend yourself.

Realize, though, that Jesus wasn't ready to die before His appointed time. When they tried to kill Him earlier in His life, they couldn't lay a hand on Him. Once it was time for His death, He had legions of angels at His disposal who would have put a stop to any of it, but as He explained, when it comes to ministry and promoting the Gospel, you live as a lamb, turn the other cheek, and don't defend yourself. In every other instance of life, you are not to passively resist but overcome evil in every manifestation.

Put it this way: If you happen to be in your home at night and a burglar breaks in, the "turn the other cheek" mentality would cause you to sit back, let him rip you off, and then say, "Wait a minute. You forgot to take this over here." Even worse, if he raped your wife, you'd reply, "Well, I've got a daughter in the other room."

I hope that example shakes you up a little bit because people in their right mind would never do that! Our response to an intruder in our home should be to fight back, whether that's to pray and use the name of Jesus or have a baseball bat ready to knock the intruder out.

Mac, you're telling me to hurt someone else?

Anyone who chooses to break into your house has not chosen the right thing. When people choose to align themselves with the wrong spirit, they're not the problem. It's the spirit behind them. As long as they're cooperating with that spirit, they may get hurt in the process as we overcome the evil that has come against us.

I get tired of hearing the Word abused. People become a doormat for everything the Devil wants to do and let him walk all over them, not realizing that is not the Word. Most of the time, you do not turn the other cheek when evil is manifest. You stand against it.

Look at Ephesians 6:13.

> *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Just like the Lord uses people to manifest His purpose through your life, the enemy uses people who are submitted to his influence to bring evil and adversity to bear against you. Whether it's the Lord or the enemy of your soul, God has chosen to limit humanity's experience to our own free moral agency. You either choose to cooperate with God or choose to cooperate with the demonic influences operating around you.

So when you encounter people who are being used of the enemy to come against your life, don't just passively stand and let them knock you around. Overcome them in the name of the Lord.

WHO ARE YOU DEALING WITH?

Let's bring this back to forgiveness. Say someone in your life has brought evil against you. He has stolen from you, hurt you, or defrauded you in some way. How do you respond?

Well, first of all, identify if you are dealing with someone who believes as you do. Two people who believe in God will have a different basis for reconciliation than someone who believes and someone who doesn't believe.

Here's what I mean: When someone who doesn't believe in God is sinning against you and doesn't ask for forgiveness or change ways, this is where you resist evil and overcome it. You don't resist the person, but you resist the evil spirit behind it. Don't roll over, ignore it, or passively resist. Overcome it, first of all, through the Word of God and prayer.

Now, you can't pray away someone else's free will. People are free moral agents. Don't pray that they'd apologize to you, and then wait for God to respond. That's manipulative. Pray that a spiritual atmosphere would surround the people who hurt you that would be as conducive as possible to them having a turn-around. Within that atmosphere, they still have to make the decision to forgive.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OVERCAME

If people who don't believe in God continue being used of the wrong spirit against you without repentance, what should you do?

Overcome the evil by being smarter and tougher than they are. God will provide you the grace you need to do that.

The children of Israel did this. In Genesis chapter 15, God told Abraham that he couldn't go into the land God had called him to because "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Then, God extended His mercy to the depraved, godless people who lived in the Promised Land for what amounted to another 400 years. I believe during those years, God was giving them the opportunity to turn to Him. They were seeing things about God through the children of Israel. They had the opportunity to begin making alterations in their own lives based on what they saw, but they didn't. The depravity grew and eventually the mercy of God had to be limited because their sin was beginning to jeopardize the plan of God.

Four hundred years after God had told that to Abraham, God told Joshua to go into the land and kill the men, women, children, cattle, livestock—everything! If you look at that from a religious standpoint, it's like, "Oh! I don't know if that could be God." Well, a point comes when evil is going to be overcome one way or the other. Archeologists have discovered that the skeletal remains of the people of that day—the Amorites and the Hittites and all those "-ites" that were in the land—were just peppered with the evidence of venereal disease. It was rampant even among the livestock. Their depravity and corruption had gone to a place where it would jeopardize the people of God and the plan of God. That's why God said kill everything.

Wait, Mac, wasn't "Do not kill" one of the Ten Commandments?

Good question. The original Hebrew refers more specifically to murder, rather than the more general term of "kill." So we are commanded to not take life unjustly. There is a time to kill. When people perpetrate evil against a nation, that nation can pray, believe, and then overcome through righteous war. If human instruments of evil suffer a consequence as a result of yielding to the wrong spirit, it may cost them their lives.

Just as God did with Israel's enemies in the Promised Land, God won't send judgment on people without first sending them the message of repentance. They will have heard the Word at some point, maybe on TV or through someone's testimony. They will have encountered godly people or atmospheres or words that direct them back to God. They will have had the opportunity to turn to God.

When those who don't believe in God ignore God's promptings to change, when they don't repent of their sin against you and continue to bring harm to you or your family, overcome evil they bring against you, first by the Word and prayer and then through necessary action to make sure that evil doesn't harm you or your family in any way.

HOW TO PRAY FOR PEOPLE

Knowing how to pray for people who have done you wrong can be difficult. Often, we can let our feelings for the other person direct our prayers, and we wind up praying for that person to do what we want rather than what God wants. If that's the case for you, I recommend that you pray the Word. The Word of God is filled with power, mighty to work in our lives and those around us.

The apostle Paul provided us with prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3 as well as Philippians 1 and Colossians 1 that we can pray over anyone. Paul prays that we would be able to see God, His power, and His love for us in a more intimate way. He recognized that God began a good work in us and that He will complete it. These Pauline prayers are in the back of the book so you can use them as a reference for your own prayers.

Now we've been talking about what to do when someone who doesn't know God is sinning against you, harming you or your family in some way. What about when someone who believes in God sins against you? That's coming up next.

Chapter 4

FORGIVENESS VS. TRUST

What should you do when believers sin against you? These are people within the family of God. They believe in God, just as you do. You may be close to them or you may only know them from a distance.

First of all, remember that time is your friend. Let your anger cool so you're not tempted to spew harsh or hurtful words the next time you see them. A purposeful pause before choosing your next course of action gives you both the time and ability to act and not simply react.

Once you have calmed down, be willing to talk to whoever you are frustrated with about the situation. We'll talk specifically about that conversation in a few chapters. For now, know that when you have been hurt by another believer, the best case scenario is that the other person recognize the hurt that he or she caused, repent of wrongdoing and promise to change, and then ask for your forgiveness. At that point, you accept his or her forgiveness, choose to put it out of your mind going forward, and move on with the relationship.

In this scenario, it's vital that you understand granting forgiveness is not the same as granting trust. Forgiveness and trust are different. You can make a decision to forgive, but you can't make a decision arbitrarily to trust somebody. Trust is built over time as you learn about a person's level of integrity and commitment to the Word of God.

Let me give you an example. If new neighbors moved into the house next to yours yesterday, you're going to believe the best of them. You'll believe they're properly motivated and good people, but you do have to get to know them and allow trust to be built. You won't entrust them with the care of your children the day after you meet them while you go on vacation for two weeks. You don't have any history with them so no trust is there. They gain a place in your heart over time by virtue of their consistency and using the Word as their guiding light. As time passes, you can entrust them with more of your heart, your life, and what's valuable to you.

Put it this way: Forgiveness must be granted, but trust must be built.

Now, I am not giving you liberty to deliberately withhold trust in order to punish others for their sin against you. Let God grow trust back within that relationship as time passes. In the meantime, treat them as if they didn't do anything wrong to the maximum degree that the current trust level will allow.

Long ago, something happened to me that has been relevant to my thinking in this matter. When I got out of the air force and off active duty, my wife and I moved to a little city, Meridian, Mississippi. Shortly after we moved there, I bought a general aviation service organization, usually referred to as an FBO (Fixed-Base Operator). After a couple years, it grew enough that I was able to acquire some DC3s and begin an air freight business.

A DC3 is a large multi-engine transport. It was the mainstay of the commercial airlines up until the late 50s; the military version was still used as the C47 into the 60s. When they came on the civilian

market, I was able to lease or buy several of them for my air freight business, which worked in conjunction with my FBO, because in the FBO, I had what was called an FAA approved part 41 flight training school. That meant I could hire a guy in the air force who was an accomplished pilot but didn't have any experience flying heavy transports and, using his GI bill, put him through my FAA approved flight school and get him a type rating and then use him in my air freight business as one of my line pilots.

In the earlier stages of this process, I was the one doing most of the training and checking guys out in the DC3. One day I was up flying with a guy who was a former military pilot, and I flew F-101s with him in the Air Guard. He had never flown the large multi-engine transport, so it was a learning curve for him. We were working through some potential emergency scenarios you may deal with as a pilot. In particular, we were up doing approach to stalls under a hood. He couldn't see outside the cockpit and so identifying the stall and recovery would be on instruments. I had demonstrated how to do it, adding power slowly as you release a little back pressure. When you do that, you can fly right out of it without losing much altitude.

The only problem was this one particular time, he added a lot of power quickly, didn't release any back pressure, and right there at the stall, because of the airplane's stall characteristics, it flipped over on its back immediately. Thankfully, we were at 5,000 feet so we had plenty of room to recover.

A week or so later, I was working with another guy, Vic. We were doing something called V1 cuts. Depending on the plane's weight, fuel load, temperature, etc., V1 is the speed at which you

can either abort the takeoff and stop in the remaining runway or you can make a takeoff on a single engine, if you do all of the related steps and get the airplane cleaned up.

V1 cuts are typically done a little before or a little after V1 speed to test the pilot's knowledge of procedure and response to an emergency. If the engine is cut after V1, then he should get it in the air, very quickly feathering the prop and getting the gear up so he can fly on out on one engine and then come around to land. If it is cut before V1, the pilot will pull both throttles back and stop in the remaining runway.

I did a V1 cut while flying with Vic, just prior to V1 speed to test how he'd respond. Because we were below V1, he should have retarded both throttles and aborted the takeoff and stopped in the remaining section of runway. The problem was he had expected me to cut it after V1. He already had it mentally programed that he was going to rotate and take off. So I cut the right engine and Vic immediately jerked the airplane about 40–50 feet in the air. There we were hanging in the air, stalled with an unfeathered propeller. I had visions of the plane inverting as it did the previous week, but this time it would be inverted at 50 feet! You can imagine the outcome of that: we wouldn't have recovered.

By the grace of God, we didn't end up inverted. I got the power back in and enough back pressure off to fly out of it—but just barely.

Now, I love Vic. He's a good pilot, a smart guy, and a good friend. He just made a mistake, so I immediately forgave him for almost killing us both. I believed the best and hoped the best for his life. I wanted him to get through this, because he'd be an asset as a line

pilot. I certainly prayed for Vic and loved him with God's love, but did I trust him after this incident? Absolutely not. It was many more weeks of V1 cuts before I could see the fruit of his change. Then, and only then, I knew I could trust him again in that situation.

At that point in my life, this situation demonstrated this truth that we've been talking about: Trust is something that is built by performance by the fruit that your life produces after a change is made. That means you can forgive others and love them. You can encourage and exhort them and hope the best for them, but trust should come only after you see change happen.

Forgive first; trust in time.



CHOOSE FORGIVENESS OVER REVENGE AND GRACE OVER REGRET.

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Chapter 5

WHEN BELIEVERS SIN AGAINST YOU AND DON'T REPENT

Now what if believers you've confronted will not reconcile or repent of a sin done against you?

The answer is that you mark them and avoid them. *That sounds pretty tough, Mac. I thought we were to love people.* Yes, we are supposed to love people, but nowhere in the Word does it require you to keep going back to people who refuses to repent of a sin they are committing against you over and over; if you do, you'll keep getting hammered with the same negative situation you were in initially.

When sin continues in a relationship unrepented, the relationship becomes unusable as a vehicle through which God can bring blessing to either person.

This type of division is the enemy's strategy for the body of Christ. Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25, Mark 3:25). When we see somebody who will not repent or reconcile and promotes the continuance of division in the body of Christ, the Word is really clear. Romans 16:17 says:

> *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

What doctrine have you learned? The doctrine of one accord. The power of agreement. One heart, one mind, speaking the same thing, striving together for the faith of the Gospel. (See Philippians 1:27.) When people are being divisive, we are to mark them because that divisiveness will ultimately produce division in the body of Christ.

Marking people doesn't mean publicly humiliate. It means you make a mental note of them. You note they are unwilling to reconcile. You might tell them why, depending on the situation. Then you avoid them until something changes in their hearts and they show they are willing to promote unity.

I think the reason for isolating people in this way is two-fold. Number one, unforgiveness is a poison like none other. If you continue trying to reach out to divisive people, you're going to get rebuffed time and again. That could trigger unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment toward them. You don't need those poisons to become a part of your life.

This is really for their sake too. If others sin against you and won't ask for forgiveness, they're going to defend their posture to other people. They'll be talking about it and ultimately cause greater schism in the body; however, if they get isolated enough and nobody wants to be around them because they're promoting division, eventually I believe the Lord may get through to them and they'll come to their senses. In the meantime, you have to protect your own heart.

HATING ISN'T AN OPTION

Now in any situation where someone sins against you and that person doesn't ask for your forgiveness, can you allow hate or resentment and bitterness to fester? Of course not. That only creates a cancer within you. It doesn't do for us to allow deep bitterness and resentment to build toward somebody who has wronged us.

One way you avoid letting hate fester is by being mindful of Ephesians 6:12.

> *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

The person who needs your forgiveness isn't your enemy. Our fight in this world isn't against a person. Our contest is with the spiritual force behind that person's behavior. If a believer continues to yield to that negative behavior, make note of that and avoid entering into strife or division any further. That way you can let peace be a part of your life, even when turmoil surrounds you.

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HUMBLY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS WHEN YOU NEED IT.

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SOME PEOPLE MAY DESERVE YOUR WRATH, BUT NOT YOUR UNFORGIVE-NESS.

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FORGIVE FREELY, FOR GOD FREELY FORGAVE YOU.

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Chapter 6

TRESPASS VS. OUGHT

Whoever covers an offense seeks love,
but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.
– Proverbs 17:9 ESV

So we've talked about how to handle it when someone sins against you. What about the times when someone hasn't sinned against you—in fact, someone may not have even done you any wrong—but you were hurt by that person in some way? That's what I want to talk about next.

Look back to Jesus' words in Mark 11:25.

> *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

We are supposed to forgive if we have ought against any. That word "ought" isn't as common nowadays, so let's look at how a few other translations phrase this:

> *But whenever you stand praying, if you have a grievance against any one, forgive it, so that your Father in Heaven may also forgive you your offences.* (Weymouth)

But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too. (NLT)

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (ESV)

God wants us to forgive everyone without exception. That means we are to forgive assumed wrongs, annoyances, and offenses. He wants you to forgive:

- The person who looked at you strangely in the church lobby.
- The person who said something in a way you didn't like.
- The coworker who mismanaged a project you're working on together.
- The person promoted before you, even though you think you were a better fit.
- The arrogant neighbor who treats you poorly.

Complaints about other people are much more frequent than sins or transgressions against each other. In fact, offenses occur on a regular basis in relationships.

So how do we deal with grievances? The simple answer is that we shouldn't be selective. We should forgive and forget every time we are tempted to hold a grudge.

Let's dive in deeper to this truth.

OUGHT AGAINST UNBELIEVERS

Resolving offenses with unbelievers is fairly straightforward. As long as the conflict isn't sin against you, forgive. If possible, communicate with them to resolve the situation, but the end result should be the same: forgive and forget. Let go of any grudges you've been tempted to hold.

If you don't purposefully forget about offenses, it'll produce a wall between you and that unbeliever that will cause division in that relationship. That wall makes it much harder for God to use that relationship to bless both of you. It also makes it difficult for you to be used of God to witness to unbelievers or bring them into the kingdom either by your example or by your word.

So when you have ought against unbelievers, pray for them. Love them. Be a witness to them. Put offense behind you so you can have peace in your relationships and move on with your life.

WHEN YOU HAVE OUGHT AGAINST A BELIEVER

When you're tempted to hold a grudge against a believer, the advice is the same. When the conflict isn't sin against you, forgive and forget.

Now, keeping relationships unified is even more important within the body of Christ for the enemy seeks to tear us apart. It benefits him when we in the body of Christ are more focused

on dividing ourselves from each other than turning outward to reach a world in need. That's why when two believers disagree, they have an important starting point for communication: unity within the body of Christ is vital.

You can go to believers with whom you have conflict and say, "Hey, look, we can't let this conflict continue. The Word says we should walk together in agreement if there's going to be enough power to change the world we live in. We can't be fighting among ourselves."

Paul talked about this in 1 Corinthians 1:10:

> *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Getting rid of divisions is key, for it places a priority on unity. This doesn't mean that you then have to agree on everything. Agreement and unity are not equal. The only thing you may agree on is the need to resolve conflict. That should be enough, however, to reconcile and forget about the grievance you had.

Now, once you have reconciled, don't bring that grievance up again. If it crosses your mind, don't dwell on it. Choose to think good things about that person. If you don't forget about those little differences you have with others, they'll become magnified as you think about them, which will lead you right back into schism and division.

Remember, God has placed the people in your life there for a reason. Don't cut off a channel of blessing that God could use simply because you want to hold a grudge. It's not worth it. Peace and unity are much more valuable.

WHEN SOMEONE IS BOTHERED BY YOU

Now, much of this book is written from the perspective of what you should do when someone hurts you. There is another aspect that needs to be addressed. You will make mistakes too and need to ask others for your forgiveness. Take a look at Matthew 5:23–24.

> *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

If you are aware that someone else has a problem with the way you did something, go to that person to resolve the situation. You may have sinned against that person or it may simply be a grievance against you; either way, when you know friction is there, work to resolve it.

Keep in mind that person may forgive you right away, but you shouldn't assume that will be true. Give the other person time and space to respond. Allow trust to be built again between you two. You know how sincere you are, but the other person does not. When others accept your forgiveness, they need to see from your actions and words that you've learned from your mistakes, just as you would want to see if the situation was reversed. Stand

by your offer of forgiveness and allow the other person time to see you've truly changed.

ONE OF THE HARDEST PEOPLE TO FORGIVE

Sometimes when we are the ones who have caused the problem, we have to not only ask for forgiveness from others; we have to forgive ourselves. Many people needlessly carry around guilt and shame for their failures. It's as though they simply can't let go and forgive themselves for their mistakes.

What each of us need to understand is that when you take responsibility for the choices you've made, you free yourself to simultaneously take responsibility for the choices you will make. That doesn't mean you'll make perfect choices going forward, but it does signal you understand that mistakes should be built upon, not ignored.

When you have wronged someone, repent and change your ways. Pray that the other person accepts your forgiveness, and then let go of the tendency to allow shame or guilt to attach to you. Choose the path of freedom and forgive your own self.

Chapter 7

HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

If you shrug off an insult and refuse to take offense, you demonstrate discretion indeed. But the fool has a short fuse and will immediately let you know when he's offended.
– Proverbs 12:16 TPT

One reason why offense is so common within relationships is because around 90% of conflict is due to misunderstanding. Misunderstanding comes when we hear or see something and interpret it wrongly.

Take, for example, someone who felt snubbed by a fellow church member in the lobby. That person felt ignored, unloved, and unheard, all because a friend didn't say hi. The reality may be that the other person was simply caught up in a conversation or focused on heading to the car to go home. That person probably never saw the one who felt snubbed. Communication can clear up these types of situations.

Rather than letting frustration and hurt fester, when others offends you, take the time to approach them and resolve the conflict.

LISTEN WELL

When you communicate with others regarding a conflict, the first step is to either explain your grievance toward them or ask the other

party, "What's the issue you think is between us?" Then listen to their response. See if the disagreement is founded on a misunderstanding, perceived conflict, or a real difference of opinion.

Remember, finding the source of the conflict will only happen if you truly take time to listen to what the other person has to say. As James 1:19 says:

> *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:*

Listening is a lost art for many people. Listening involves more than just shutting your mouth. Listening means that you give ear to what the other person is actually telling you. When you listen to people and truly hear what they have to say, you value them—and when people feel valued and heard, they will more likely be willing to hear what you have to say in return.

I know a few folks who are so intent on making their point that they don't truly listen to other people. They don't understand that their job isn't to convince people their opinions are right but to find common ground. Common ground provides the place from which resolution can be found. That foundation will never be found if you don't first take the time to listen.

One way to ensure you're listening is to use the paraphrase. Repeat back what the other person said to you in your own words so you can make sure you are both on the same page. That gives the other person an opportunity to correct you if you are wrong, allows enough time to pass so emotional dust can settle, and

gives you the chance to form a response. It also prevents you from acting on incorrect information or a misunderstanding. The paraphrase will help you become a better listener.

Most interpersonal conflict can be settled if you do this. Be willing to communicate, determined to listen, and willing to get a clear understanding of what the conflict is about so you can resolve the situation you are facing.

WHAT YOU CAN—AND CAN'T—CHANGE

Of the conflicts that remain, most can be resolved by changing methodology as opposed to objective. This implies that you have to be willing to change your methods as long as you can still achieve the same objective.

Now before you sit down to resolve conflict, one of the things you need to do is establish your refusal parameters. In the event there really is a problem, how far can you go in yielding to the other person's viewpoint without sacrificing what's most important to you? Determine that before you begin your discussion.

The only thing you should be unwilling to yield on is the principle of the Word. If a husband and wife are arguing about church, then the refusal parameter should be "I'm not going to forsake the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). You can compromise on what service you attend, but don't stop attending church because of your spouse. If it comes down to it, be sweet. Give your spouse a kiss and go to church because that's a refusal parameter you're not going to violate.

Once you've set your refusal parameters, you can determine if there really is a difference regarding methodology. Okay, we know we need to hear the Word. The question is how do we do that? Do we do it at the Saturday night service? Do we do it at the nine o'clock service or the 11 o'clock service? These questions have to do with method, not the end objective of assembling together with other believers.

This is exactly how you love people. When you can give to somebody without violating your refusal parameter, you should; yielding to someone else's preference is one way we can work to eliminate strife in our lives. Follow this pattern, and you will have more rest, more peace, and good relationships.

OTHERS HAVE GOOD IDEAS TOO

Now, being willing to change methodology to achieve the same objective may require you to admit that someone else has a better idea than you! A lot of people have a hard time accepting this thought. In the past, I've gone into meetings with my associate pastors and the last thing I want to hear from those guys is how bad my idea is and what we should do instead. The Word says that if I want to engage the wisdom that is from above (James 3:17), then I will be easy to be entreated. In common day vernacular, that means I should be willing to yield to reason. If you want to be willing to yield to reason, you need to set aside your ego and any hint of the feeling "I'm the one who always gives in so I'm not going to give in this time!"

When you give to somebody without violating your refusal parameter, you are being wise, willing to yield to reason, and obeying the law of love.

WHEN THE PROBLEM STILL REMAINS

What about the small percentage of conflict that is based on reality but cannot be resolved within your refusal parameters?

We can go back to the instructions of Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned." What's the doctrine you have learned? The royal law of love: to be kind, to be gentle, to give to other people where you can, to pursue harmony, one accord, and agreement. When you encounter people who consistently cause strife and division that's contrary to the doctrine you've learned, mark them and avoid them.

As I said earlier, this isn't telling you to publicly humiliate anyone. It's simply saying that when you encounter others with whom you've done your best to eliminate strife with and you can't, keep away from them. If contention is always swirling around them, criticism and negativity is constant, and everything about them draws you into that mire of strife and contention—and you've made your best effort to resolve the situation—you're going to have to avoid them. You can't be around them anymore because strife and division is a poison that will divide the body of Christ on any level.

Now, don't arbitrarily isolate people with no explanation. Approach them and say, "Look, we've made every effort to put these things

behind us, but every time I'm with you, the strife, the gossip, the contention, all these negative things are swirling around. Our efforts to rectify those things haven't succeeded so it's best for us both to limit our future contact." Maybe that would be sufficient enough to jerk that person back to reality!

The point is, strife is such a terrible poison that it's important for you to make mental note of people who are consistently yielding to this spirit and keeping things stirred up in the body of Christ. Make an identification of those people and avoid them, separate yourself from them.

Romans 16:18 continues: "…for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

One of the things that keeps people sucked into continuing fellowship with divisive people is that divisive people may look like nice, sweet sheep with a lot of good words and fair speeches. The telling difference is the fruit of their lives. Jesus said in Matthew chapter seven we can know them by their fruit. What's the fruit? If it is strife, contention, and division, make note of it and avoid them.

In many cases, avoiding these people is the only way they will turn their lives around for they will realize it's only themselves that they've isolated.

BECOME SKILLED AT RESOLVING CONFLICT

So learn how to be become skilled in conflict resolution. When you do, you'll be able to keep peace in your life and deal with interpersonal conflict and perceived conflict of interests in a way that is scriptural. To recap:

- Gain agreement that the matter needs to be resolved and can't be allowed to continue.
- Have a conversation regarding what the conflict is about and listen to what the other person says. Use the paraphrase to repeat back what you heard to ensure you've truly understood.
- If a significant point of disagreement does exist, set your refusal parameters—what can you give without yielding—and be willing to do so, even if you're the one who seems to give all the time.
- If you can't resolve the conflict after you have made your best effort, separate yourself from that person, especially if the fruit of that person's life is division.

This is how you resolve conflict.



NO LIST OF EXCUSES IS ENOUGH REASON TO HOLD ONTO A GRUDGE.

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FORGIVENESS DOESN’T ERASE WRONGS. IT ALLOWS YOU TO HEAL FROM THEM.

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ALL ACTS, FROM BIG TO SMALL, CAN BE FORGIVEN THROUGH A CHOICE.

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Chapter 8

MARRIAGE AND UNFORGIVENESS

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

One relationship stands above others as the relationship where reconciliation and forgiveness is most important of all: the marriage relationship. You are (or will be) closer to your spouse than anybody else. Because of that, God will use your spouse to bring the most blessing, light, illumination, and anointing to you.

The only way this can happen is if you continually strive to maintain peace with your spouse. When conflict happens, work to resolve it. Don't let conflict fester or bitterness become normal. Do all you can to keep your marriage free from long-lasting conflict.

That's easy to say and not always easy to fulfill. Just for the sheer fact that you interact with your spouse the most, you'll run into the most conflict with each other. Because of that, the enemy will work on that relationship first, especially since your commitment to one another is used as a type of the commitment between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:25).

You have to make a decision to keep peace with your spouse.

HOW TO DISAGREE WELL

It starts with disagreements. Disagreements about daily life can happen often, so here are a few tips to keep in mind when working through them.

1. Apologies matter. Too many marriages have two people who are determined they're not going to be the first ones to apologize. It's like two elementary school kids: "He owes me an apology, so I'm not saying anything until he's apologized" and vice versa. Stay humble and be willing to apologize for your mistakes.

2. Communicate as equals. You and your spouse are on the same team. You both want what is best for your family. Keep that at the forefront of your disagreement, and you'll be able to come to a quicker resolution.

3. Focus on disagreements rather than personal differences. When your conversations center around the concern you are addressing, arguments are no longer personal battles against each other, but a rallying together to find the best solution.

4. Skip the silent treatment. You can't endlessly avoid your spouse. You need to have an open line of communication with your spouse to talk about daily details of life and work through conflict that arises.

5. Don't break boundaries. Learn to deal with points of difference in a way that doesn't force either party to violate a

> refusal parameter. If spouses force each other to violate a refusal parameter in his or her heart, a major step has been taken toward the destruction of that relationship.

Remember, when you allow conflict to remain, you open the door for division to creep in. Division is poisonous and leads to strife, and strife is very dangerous to allow inside your home. It will rob you of every vestige of peace in your life. If you have strife in the home, it doesn't matter how much money you make, how good looking you are, how well you do on the job, how healthy you are, your life will be as close to a living hell as it's going to be.

Conflict resolution must become a priority within your marriage—and in order for that to happen, you must forgive your spouse, time and time again.

FORGIVE AND FORGET... ALMOST ALWAYS

Now, once you forgive your spouse, you need to put that disagreement behind you. I've seen the tendency to dredge up past mistakes in counseling too many times. Marriages will be on the verge of breaking up because neither partner will forget what the other one did ten years ago, four years ago, last year, yesterday. They still remember. They respond, "Yeah? You say that now, but look what you did to me." Until they forget, forgiveness has not occurred. Until forgiveness occurs, God will not be able to use that relationship to bring blessings to either of you.

So what do you do with a spouse who won't repent or reconcile? I have seen many instances where the pain runs so deep, even an

effort to bless that person doesn't break through that veneer of hardness and forgiveness isn't extended. What do you do then?

That is a little tough. You can't mark and avoid a spouse like you would most people, but you can pray for your spouse. You can trust the Word to bring change to your spouse, and to this relationship more than any other, you can use the power of love and blessing to begin changing his or her heart.

WHEN INDISCRETION HAPPENS

If an offense occurs that's of enough significance —perhaps infidelity in a marriage—the Lord makes it clear in the Word that could be grounds for you to pursue a divorce, even though that's not the best. It is a provision. I think the judgment of what to do should be made on the likelihood of the offending person continuing that same kind of behavior.

If the spouse who has committed the offense repents and asks the other spouse's forgiveness, then the betrayed spouse has the opportunity to extend forgiveness. If that path is taken, then it needs to be understood that he/she is not going to dredge this up in the future and hold it against the other or withhold blessing because of the indiscretion. If a spouse asks for forgiveness and it is given, both should move forward and leave the past behind.

Now, as we talked about earlier in this book, that doesn't mean trust should be immediately given. Trust will take time to rebuild, and some time will need to pass before the relationship reaches a new normal.

I remember a situation where counseling had been ongoing, and the husband—the one who had engaged in the infidelity in this instance—got upset two or three months after asking for forgiveness. The sexual relationship with his wife wasn't normalized yet. What he needed to understand is that trust needed to be rebuilt in that relationship. To forget is one thing, but he needed to romance his wife all over again. He had to build back what was destroyed by the disloyalty and lay that foundation of trust all over again.

It can be the other way too. I've heard a wife say, "Well, I forgave him, but I don't trust him," and she used that as her excuse not to forgive. Under the guise of not trusting yet, she endeavored to punish him by withholding blessing from him. You can't play these types of games, because God knows our hearts. Don't try to fake out your spouse or fake out your pastor or counselor. This is a matter between you and God. If you're using trust issues as a way to engage in unforgiveness and get a little retribution for what your spouse did to you, you're keeping peace from entering back into that relationship.

YOUR MARRIAGE MATTERS

Truly, if two believers who care about the Lord are married, no reason exists for a divorce to ever occur because change can be made. Unfortunately, I used to say there's never an excuse for a divorce between Christians, but I've changed over the years. I've bumped into too many instances where spouses—even those who call themselves a Christian—will not extend forgiveness, ask for forgiveness, or engage in reconciliation. They don't realize that they've consigned their life, their spouse, and their

children to frustration and anguish because of their bullheadedness. That lack of forgiveness will hurt their family in a way that can multiply as the years pass.

Do know that God won't let a spouse who is praying for reconciliation spend the next 30 or 40 years of his/her life tormented because of his/her spouse's disobedience. The day will come when the Lord will take that disobedient party out of the other's life, one way or the other, and that person will be free to love again. Now, you don't focus your prayers on freedom to love again, but on your spouse, not with the intent to manipulate your spouse, but to provide a spiritual atmosphere that is as conducive as possible to having a turnaround.

If you say to yourself, "I made a mistake when I married her. I was drunk. I need to repent and get another one." The truth of the matter is that when you're saved, you are a new creature in Christ. You and your spouse are seen by God as being one flesh in the Lord. The two of you are a new creature in Christ. Don't allow the enemy to divide that oneness. Be determined to walk in the love of God, prefer the other's needs, and be better at yielding and giving to your spouse's need than your own. As you do, you will enable your spouse to respond well to your love in return.

Remember, the enemy will attack your marriage first because that's what represents your relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. Don't perpetuate contention by refusing to address the issues that separate you. Work to bring about a place of one accord, because it is only together you're going to be heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7)!

Chapter 9

WHEN FORGIVENESS HAS TRULY HAPPENED

When you forgive, you in no way change the past,
but you sure do change the future.
– Bernard Meltzer

What about those occasions when you've forgiven someone, but flashes of negative memories come every time you are with that person? You try to cast those thoughts down, but you feel something in your heart twisting. You don't want to feel resentful, but thoughts of resentment and frustration appear unbidden time and again.

Two questions usually come out of this situation: Have I really forgiven them? If so, how do I know when it has happened?"

Well, as I explained earlier, forgiveness can't be in word only. It needs to be from your heart. When you can bless someone as freely as you did before the offense occurred, forgiveness has happened.

This ability to bless those who have hurt you is more than just an indicator of your feelings. It's also the way you move your heart down the path of forgiveness. When you realize you're feeling a twinge of pain or resentment, bless those who have hurt you in some way. Send a bouquet of flowers. Do something kind for them. Write a note thanking those people for something. I have written so many notes over the years, because I can say things in a note I can't quite make myself say face-to-face yet. I let them

know how I appreciate this or that, thank them for the role they have played in my life, etc.

You can bless people in a lot of ways, so be creative. When you're feeling like you're having trouble forgiving other people, choose to move in this direction. Ask the Lord, "How can I bless them?" and He will show you a way.

When you bless them, you're doing two things. First, you're making it hard for them to hold a grudge against you. After all, if you're smart enough to bless them, how can they feel grudging toward you? Think about people who have blessed you time and again. They can't do anything wrong anymore in your eyes, can they?

When you bless others, you do something in their hearts, but more significantly you do something in yours. Jesus said where a man's treasure is, there his heart is also (Matthew 6:21.) When you begin to give others treasures of your prayer or time or finances, then you move your heart toward them. This is how forgiveness is realized in its final outworking.

So when offense comes, name it, call it, and make sure the other person understands it. If that person chooses to repent, extend forgiveness. With forgiveness, choose to forget and not think about the situation anymore. Do remember that forgiveness is not the same as trusting. Trust has to be built and it will come when both of you are moving the relationship toward peace. If you want to expedite forgiveness, begin blessing the people who have hurt you. You'll remove any dagger of resentment in your own heart and cause forgiveness to be realized much more quickly. You will also cement other people's good opinion of you in the process.

When you've done all these things and dealt the poison of unforgiveness a deathblow, you will find freedom becoming a fact in your life.



FORGIVENESS IS GRANTED, BUT TRUST IS EARNED.

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APPENDIX:
THE PAULINE PRAYERS

Ephesians 1:16–23 (Amp.)

I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. [For I always pray to] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation [of insight into mysteries and secrets] in the [deep and intimate] knowledge of Him, by having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints (His set-apart ones), and [so that you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe, as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His [own] right hand in the heavenly [places], far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in this age and in this world, but also in the age and the world which are to come. And He has put all things under His feet and has appointed Him the universal and supreme Head of the church [a headship exercised throughout the church], which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all [for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and Who fills everything everywhere with Himself].

Ephesians 3:16–21 (Amp.)

May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man

by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it]; [that you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]! Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it).

Colossians 1:9–14 (Amp.)

For this reason we also, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray and make [special] request for you, [asking] that you may be filled with the full (deep and clear) knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [in comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] and in understanding and discernment of spiritual things—that you may walk (live and conduct yourselves) in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him and desiring to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing and increasing in

and by the knowledge of God [with fuller, deeper, and clearer insight, acquaintance, and recognition]. [We pray] that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy, giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the Light. [The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have our redemption through His blood, [which means] the forgiveness of our sins.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:9–11 (Amp.)

And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment], so that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value [recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble]. May you abound in and be filled with the fruits

of righteousness (of right standing with God and right doing) which come through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One), to the honor and praise of God that His glory may be both manifested and recognized].

PRAYER OF SALVATION

God wants everyone to receive eternal salvation. The way to receive this salvation is to call upon the name of Jesus and confess Him as your Lord. The Bible says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9, 13).

Jesus has given salvation, healing, and countless benefits to all who call upon His name. These benefits can be yours if you receive Him into your heart by praying this prayer:

Heavenly Father, I come to You admitting that I am a sinner. Right now, I choose to turn away from sin, and I ask You to cleanse me of all unrighteousness. I believe that Your Son, Jesus, died on the cross to take away my sins. I also believe that He rose again from the dead so that I may be justified and made righteous through faith in Him. I call upon the name of Jesus Christ to be the Savior and Lord of my life. Jesus, I choose to follow You, and I ask that You fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit. I declare right now that I am a born again child of God. I am free from sin and full of the righteousness of God. I am saved in Jesus' name, amen.

If you have just received Jesus Christ as your Savior, or if this book has changed your life, we would like to hear from you. Please call us at 763.315.7200 or email us at info@mac-hammond.org.

“

LIVING LIFE FOCUSED ON WHAT WAS WILL NEVER TURN LIFE INTO SOMETHING BETTER.

Tweet this. @machammondmin #Forgive



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mac Hammond is senior pastor of Living Word, a large and growing church in Brooklyn Park (a suburb of Minneapolis), Minnesota. He is the host of the *Winner's Way* broadcast and author of several internationally distributed books. Mac is broadly acclaimed for his ability to apply the principles of the Bible to practical situations and the challenges of daily living.

Mac Hammond graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1965. Upon graduation, he entered the Air Force and received his wings in November 1966. He subsequently served two tours of duty in Southeast Asia, accumulating 198 combat missions. He was honorably discharged in 1970 with the rank of Captain.

Between 1970 and 1980, Mac was involved in varying capacities in the general aviation industry including ownership of a successful air cargo business serving the Midwestern United States. A business acquisition brought the Hammonds to Minneapolis where they ultimately founded Living Word Christian Center in 1980 with 12 people in attendance.

After 40 years, that group of twelve people has grown into an active church body of 10,000 members. Today some of the

outreaches that spring from Living Word include Maranatha Christian Academy, Living Free Recovery Services, CFAITH, and a national and international media outreach that includes hundreds of audio/video teaching series, a half-hour television broadcast called *The Winner's Way* with Mac Hammond, seen nationwide, and a daily 60-second television commentary called the *Winner's Minute.*

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You can also visit us on the web at
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For a complete list of available resources,
please visit us on the web at **machammond.org**
or you may also contact us at:

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I FORGIVE YOU

God wants you to forgive. He wants you to forgive your friends, family, and even that stranger who recently offended you. He wants you to live free from the bitterness that follows those who don't forgive.

However, there are a lot of questions that arise surrounding forgiveness. Can you trust someone once you've forgiven them? What should you do when someone is abusive? How can you forgive the unforgiveable?

That's what this book is about. Mac Hammond takes a deep dive into what forgiveness looks like with your friends, your spouse, those who believe in God, and those who don't. Get ready to better understand how your life will change when you freely use these three words: "I forgive you."

For more information about this ministry or other available resources, please contact us at:

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