

FROM RED LETTER LIVING

FORGIVING OTHERS

CHALLENGE

A 10-DAY JOURNEY
TO HELP YOU FORGIVE OTHERS



ZACH ZEHNDER



Forgiving Others Challenge

Version 1.0

Copyright 2021

Red Letter Living LLC

www.forgivingotherschallenge.com

www.redletterchallenge.com

hello@redletterchallenge.com

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, or recording—without prior written permission. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews. Please encourage and participate in doing the right thing.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, NIV, Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Printed in the United States of America.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Before You Begin

Day 1: What is forgiveness?

Day 2: What does Jesus say is the key to forgiving others?

Day 3: Why is it hard to forgive others?

Day 4: Are there other solutions to forgiving others?

Day 5: Can I truly ever forgive like God?

Day 6: How Do I Forgive?

Day 7: Part 2, How do I forgive?

Day 8: Does forgiving mean forgetting?

Day 9: How do I forgive someone who isn't sorry?

Day 10: What do we learn through forgiveness?

Conclusion

Endnotes

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to be surrounded by family and friends who help turn ordinary into extraordinary.

Thank you, Allison, Andrea, James, Mark, Lois, Suzy, Z (Pops), Mom, Jacob, Aaron, GG, and Dan, for helping me understand how we are “better together” by your help in this project.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Forgiving Others Challenge: A 10-Day Journey to Help You Forgive Others*.

Let's jump right in!

Take a look at the following two lists and circle which one you would prefer in your life:

List 1

Healthier relationships

Improved mental health

Less anxiety, stress, and hostility

Lower blood pressure, stronger immune system, and improved heart health

List 2

Bring anger and bitterness into every relationship and new experience

Become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present

Become depressed or anxious

Feel that your life lacks meaning or purpose or that you're at odds with your spiritual beliefs

Fewer symptoms of depression

Lose valuable and enriching connectedness with others

Improved self-esteem

Live in the bondage of fear

What's the difference between these two lists?

One word. Forgiveness.

After much research, Mayo Clinic, a leader in healthcare, says that the only difference between List 1 and List 2 is a practice called forgiveness.^[1] List #1 describes what forgiveness leads to, and List #2 represents what holding onto unforgiveness leads to.

Take a moment to read through those lists again. Note the gravity and importance of practicing forgiveness. It literally could mean the difference between healthy or unhealthy relationships. How you forgive could lead to a non-anxious or anxious life. It can determine whether you are living with meaning and purpose. From a spiritual perspective, further benefits that may be harder to measure when we practice forgiveness are hope, joy, gratitude, and peace.

When you consider the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual benefits, forgiveness is the difference between bondage and freedom.

If forgiveness is so important, then why do so many struggle and hold onto unforgiveness?

Writing as a Christian, I wish I could tell you that we who have received God's forgiveness get this right. But, sadly, we are not known for grace but rather judgment.^[2] By definition, those two words, judgment, and grace are polar opposites. Judgment is getting what you do deserve. Grace is getting a gift you don't deserve. **How is it possible that we who have received the grace of Jesus can be so ungracious towards others?**

Author Brian Zahnd says, "Western Christianity is in need of an update...it needs a fresh message—not a new innovation or novel interpretation, but a return to our roots. And what are our roots? The primary experience and central emphasis of Christianity revolves around the theme of forgiveness. If Christianity is about anything, it is about forgiveness."^[3]

While forgiving others is essential for everyone, it is the Christian's responsibility to lead the way. God has called us to be conduits of His forgiveness, not reservoirs. And it's time to take what God has given to us and extend it to others.

My hope through this 10-Day Challenge is that you become a more forgiving person. So, before we dive into Day 1, I want to give you three reasons why forgiving others is of utmost importance.

1. Forgiving others will bring you freedom.

How well we receive forgiveness from God and give away forgiveness to others is the difference between living a life in bondage or freedom. Jesus has given you everything you need to be free, and I desire you to experience this freedom for yourself. **Jesus has not only won eternal life for those that believe in Him but freedom to be experienced now in this life.** Jesus, speaking of Himself in John 8:36, says, **“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”** If Jesus has won freedom for us, then it’s time for us to truly walk in, live out of, and enjoy the freedom that Jesus paid such a steep price.

When we withhold forgiveness, while we think it is doing more harm to the other person, typically, it does the most damage to ourselves. Not only does forgiving others allow others to encounter God’s grace in their lives, but it also brings freedom into our lives.

2. Forgiving others will bring glory to God.

An even more important reason to forgive others is that it will bring glory to God. A question that

people continually dwell on, ask of others, and Google, is “What is the purpose of life?” The answer is found in the Bible. God, Himself tells us in Isaiah 43:7 (NLT): **“Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them.”**

After how good God has been to each one of us, a noble life simply seeks to bring Him glory in all things. How you bring God glory will look different for you than it does for me. We are all uniquely wired, possess different gifts, and live in different circumstances. But, from a 30,000-foot view, if our purpose is to glorify God, we do that when we follow and reflect Jesus. When people have questions about the character or nature of God, the best place to look is Jesus Himself. Jesus is God Himself revealed. He is the glory of God made manifest.

Colossians 1:15 says, **“The Son [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God.”** Furthermore, John 1:14 says, **“The Word [Jesus] became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

The glory of God in the flesh, Jesus, invites each of us into a life of following after Him and reflecting Him. Nothing brings glory to God like when you and I step into the life He’s invited us into. Therefore, when we, who have been forgiven

through Jesus, give forgiveness to others, we are revealing the glory of God. So while John 3:16 may be the most memorized verse, it's the next verse, John 3:17, that screams God's purpose in Jesus, and now in us: **For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

3. Forgiving others helps others experience freedom.

When you forgive others, not only do you experience freedom, not only does God get the glory, but the person on the receiving end gets a front-row seat at witnessing the very grace of God in their lives. When you forgive, you're not just setting yourself free; you're setting up others to be free. It is God's kindness, expressed through His grace, that ultimately brings a real-life change in this world.

I love the way that the Message translates Romans 2:4: **"God is kind, but he's not soft. In kindness he takes us firmly by the hand and leads us into a radical life-change."**

In a world where sin is still rampant, where anger, hatred, and division are rising, and where justice and fairness are celebrated, God's grace is the needed light that will pierce through the darkness. The greatest answer to all of the injustices we are

experiencing in this world is to shine God's grace. Light always defeats darkness.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, **“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”**^[4]

Speaking of light, Jesus declares to us this truth in Matthew 5:16: **In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.**

There you have it. From the mouth of Jesus, He declares that through our works, specifically, when we bring His light that is inside of us out into the darkness, others can see this good and glorify God in heaven. What does this mean? **While our good works can never save us, our good works can help bring salvation to others.** We can never force God to move, but when you give away His grace to someone else, you are making room for the glory of God to be seen. You are allowing the Holy Spirit to work miraculously in someone else's life.

So what's at stake with forgiving others?

Forgiving others will bring all glory to God by bringing freedom to all involved.

Now that we've laid the foundation behind why forgiving others is important let's get really practical now. How do we forgive others?

The answer to every spiritual problem in existence is found in Jesus.

Forgiving Others Challenge will answer some BIG questions related to forgiveness. These questions were carefully selected through research and polls. But first, we will define what forgiveness is and discover what Jesus says is the key to forgiving others well. Here's the outline of where we are going over the coming ten days.

- Day 1: What is forgiveness?
- Day 2: What does Jesus say is the key to forgiving others?
- Day 3: Why is it hard to forgive others?
- Day 4: Are there other solutions to forgiving others?
- Day 5: Can I truly ever forgive like God?
- Day 6: Part 1, How do I forgive?
- Day 7: Part 2, How do I forgive?

- Day 8: Does forgiving mean forgetting?
- Day 9: How do I forgive someone who isn't sorry?
- Day 10: What can I learn through forgiving others?

Along the way, not only will we attempt to answer those questions through a biblical lens, but each question will also feature a challenge to complete in the hope that ultimately you would become a more forgiving person.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you begin your journey, here are a few helpful tips to maximize the impact that this 10-day challenge can have on your life.

- 1. Invite someone to walk with you.** Most of the significant challenges that you conquer in life don't happen in isolation. Therefore, we hope that you will do this challenge with at least one other person. If you are joining in this challenge with a small group or your church, it's still essential that you have one person who can help hold you accountable for the duration of this challenge. This person should be someone you can trust deeply, is walking as a disciple of Jesus, and is mature in the faith. After finding an accountability partner, identify specifics, such as how often you will check in with one another and what questions you will ask each other at those check-ins.
- 2. Write it down.** Starting on Day 1, each day will offer a challenge to complete. Because of the nature of *Forgiving Others Challenge*, most of the daily challenges will revolve around personal questions or challenges. We hope that you won't gloss over these and jump to the next day but that you will spend time being honest with the questions and challenges.

Francis Bacon once said, “**Reading maketh a full man...and writing an exact man.**”⁴ In other words, writing will force you to be more precise in your thoughts. Spending an average of an extra 10 to 15 minutes a day writing your thoughts down will position you well for the challenges that will be difficult to complete.

3. **Don't give up.** You will not do this challenge perfectly. This challenge goes beyond checking boxes just to get it done. It's a challenge that will bring you to be a more gracious and forgiving person of others. But, along the way, don't forget to give yourself grace. We have found that the most vulnerable day—the day you will be tempted to give up—is “the day after perfect.” So, if you miss a day or struggle with a day, don't give up. Instead, give yourself grace and pick up the next day. Keep walking the journey.

4. **Share the wins.** Finally, join the thousands of others who are embarking on this challenge. Use #ForgivingOthersChallenge at any time on social media to share quotes, stories, or testimonies of what God is doing in your story. Sharing your wins with others will not only encourage others to do the same, but it will also give people the opportunity to glorify God through your victories!

Let's Do This!



FORGIVING OTHERS **DAY 1**
CHALLENGE

DAY 1: WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

The gas station was getting demolished piece-by-piece, and I couldn't have been happier to see this dreadful business go down. For the previous 11 years, every time I would drive past this gas station with my family, I would outwardly "boo" and proclaim to my family, "I will never, ever, even if I have to run out of gas first, give this place my business again. They'll never see a dollar of mine again." So seeing the place get destroyed felt like vindication for me.

I wouldn't characterize myself as an angry person, so it always felt odd that I harbored so much anger and hatred towards a gas station. Why was I so mad at this gas station? What could warrant such a response? I'm glad you asked!

Eleven years before the gas station was demolished, my dream of becoming a pastor was finally coming to fruition. I had been called to plant a church in Mount Dora, FL. I was excited to visit our new city, meet a few key people in the community, and scout out a place to live for our family. It was an incredible weekend, except for one part. While visiting the area, I noticed my fuel tank was just past the "E!" So I pulled over to the closest gas station I could find. I put in my credit card, selected what type of gas I wanted, and finally inserted the gas nozzle in the car. Then, I went inside to use the restroom and grab some Twizzlers.

After checking out, I walked out to my car and noticed that the gas nozzle was on the ground pumping gas onto the pavement. Not only had it filled up my tank but it proceeded to pump an extra truckload worth of gas onto the pavement as well. The bill for my small car was well over \$100. Their faulty equipment cost me a lot of money.

I went inside to tell them what happened, expecting to experience sympathy (the customer is always right, right?) and get a refund because of their faulty equipment. Rather than getting sympathy or a refund, I received some of the rudest customer

service I'd ever experienced. In a nutshell, I was told it was my problem. I shouldn't have left the car unattended. *Yes, I know they have signs that say that, but come on!* They told me that I was responsible for the mess. Not only were they not going to refund me, but they were very disappointed in me for causing such a dangerous, flammable situation in their parking lot! Talk about not what I expected.

I vowed that day never to do business at that gas station again. And for 11 years, I never did. Then, amazingly, the final week before our family relocated to Omaha, NE, I witnessed this place getting torn down. It felt like the perfect bookend to an otherwise great 11-year chapter in Florida.

At this point, you might be questioning why you are reading a book about forgiveness from a man who held onto anger for 11 years over something so trivial. I wish I had handled myself differently. I wish that I had given them another chance. I should have had a discussion with a manager later that could have helped them in their future business transactions. With all of the things done poorly, my point in bringing up this story is to help introduce to you the definition of forgiveness. Before you go on a journey to forgive others, you need to understand what will be asked of you. To begin, then, let's define forgiveness.

When Jesus speaks of forgiveness, He uses three different words in the original Greek language:

- **Aphiemi**: sending away or letting go of someone or something.
- **Apoluo**: setting free or pardon toward someone.
- **Charizomai**: being gracious toward someone.

Our modern-day definition of forgiveness is similar to these Greek words and has two aspects to it:

1. **To cancel a debt**
2. **To stop feelings of anger or hatred towards someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake**

The first aspect, canceling a debt, has to do with an action. The second aspect has to do with an attitude. You cannot experience the total freedom that comes from forgiveness without both the action and attitude taking place.

If we go back to the example of the gas station, then, in truth, I was well on the path to forgiveness. If part of forgiveness is canceling the debt, I literally did that. I paid for the mistake. The money went onto my credit card and out of my account.

But, where I struggled was in my attitude. It was extremely negative and I even experienced happiness at their expense. You could say that both myself and the gas station continued to pay the consequences of this event. I harbored anger. And I treated them poorly because of it. I kept my business away from them, which in turn, was probably one tiny reason for their ultimate demise.

While I don't think all issues are as cut-and-dry as my gas station incident, I have found the second aspect of forgiveness to be much more challenging than the first. The first, very literally, at times can be settled with an action. But the second feels more like a process than an action. So I hope to help you with your action and attitude as you read and complete this 10-Day Challenge. I wish all forgiveness examples we go through in this life were as trivial as the one I just mentioned. But, in reality, we deal in a world where words like murder, rape, terrorism, divorce, infidelity, neglect, abuse, racism, and greed are prevalent. So, if we struggle with forgiveness in some of the trivial things we go through, then how much more will we struggle when significant issues come our way?

The reason we need forgiveness is that we live in a world filled with sin.

The literal definition of sin is “to miss the mark.” Anytime we miss the mark intended, we commit a sin. Sin can come in all shapes and forms. It can

come from things we say, think, and do that we shouldn't (sins of commission). It can also come from things we ought to say, think or do that we don't (sins of omission). Every sin, no matter how big or small, has a consequence. Sin has a cost to it every time.

Sadly, you and I add to the world's brokenness with our sin. Romans 3 declares that there is no one righteous and that we all fall short of God's glory. Furthermore, Romans 6:23 says that the wages of our sin is death. Rather than making us pay for our sin, however, God had a different plan.

Isaiah speaks about this plan centuries before it even came. He tells us the truth about the consequences of our sin in Isaiah 59:1-2:

**Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short
to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
But your iniquities have separated
you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not hear.**

However, rather than continually keeping us separated from Him, He chose to come down and make all things right. Look at Isaiah 59:15b-16:

**The Lord looked and was displeased
that there was no justice.**

**“He saw that there was no one,
he was appalled that there was no one to
intervene;
so his own arm achieved salvation for him,
and his own righteousness sustained
him.**

Of course, Isaiah was prophesying about the death and resurrection of Jesus. God Himself became the sacrifice in order to pay for all of our sins. Jesus’s death on the cross was the one-time payment for the sins of every man and woman who ever has existed.

Jesus should have never had to go to the cross to die in my place. If I committed the crime, I should have done the time. And yet, God did this for me, and He also did it for you. Jesus died a death that you deserved to die. Jesus paid a price that should have come out of your account. The problem was the amount you owed could never have been repaid, so God sent His one and only Son to die on the cross to forgive you of all of your sins.

God didn’t pay the price on the cross and then continually lord this over you. He didn’t ask you to now pay Him back even more. No, what did He do? After dying on the cross, He invited you back into His family as sons and daughters, called you to follow after Him so you can live with meaning and purpose today, and offered you an opportunity to reign forever in heaven with Him. These are

not the actions of an angry God. Or a God who is out to get you. Instead, these are the actions of a God who has forgiven you.

Why did He do all of this?

God forgives you because He loves you.

Psalm 86:5 says, **“You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.”**

It’s that simple. God loves you. He didn’t want the separation from you any longer, so He made a way through Jesus so that we could be in a perfect relationship with God again.

Now, this God who has perfectly forgiven you calls you to be like Him and forgive others.

Until Jesus comes back, we will live in a world filled with sin. So rather than stuffing it, minimizing it, or reacting against it, Jesus issues a call for us to bring grace and forgiveness into the brokenness of this world.

Forgiveness is never easy, but it is certainly possible.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

Answer the following questions. As you answer them, pray that God would reveal both the offenses and the offenders in your past or present that need forgiveness.

1. Do you view yourself as a “good” person or a “bad” person, and why?

2. In your past, when it comes to forgiving others, did you struggle more with canceling the debt or holding onto anger, resentment, or hatred towards someone who has offended or hurt you?

3. Is there one person or action in your past that you have forgiven? Were there any steps that you took that were important? Is there anything you wished you’d have done differently?

4. Is there one person or action that you are currently having a hard time forgiving? Why?



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 2**

**DAY 2: WHAT DOES JESUS SAY IS
THE KEY TO FORGIVING OTHERS?**

Shocked. Stunned. How could it be so obvious? 🤔

Those were my reactions when I read in totality what Jesus said about forgiving others to His disciples. I know we live in a world with more intelligence and information at our fingertips than ever, but sometimes we can overcomplicate things.

By looking at all the direct commands that Jesus gave to His disciples about forgiveness, you will

find the key to forgiving others stand out more clearly than you have ever seen before.

Let me go ahead and lay out the Red Letters of Jesus concerning His commands to forgive others that He issued to His disciples:

- Matthew 6:12: **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**
- Matthew 6:14-15: **For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.**
- Mark 11:25: **And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.**
- Luke 6:37: **Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**
- Luke 11:4: **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.**

These commands of Jesus are direct and obvious. Here are a few other instances He talks about forgiveness, either as more commands or in His general teaching.

Luke 7:47: Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.

In the previous instance, Jesus connects a sacrificial act from a misunderstood woman to how much He had forgiven her. In other words, her motivation to do a good work was fueled by the grace that Jesus had already given to her.

In the coming section, Jesus is telling us that our forgiveness should extend even to those who continually make a mess of things.

Luke 17:3-4: If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.

Directly after hearing this, in verse 5, the disciples get it right this time. They say, “Increase our faith.” **Forgiving others is always connected to our faith.**

Finally, after the resurrection, Jesus makes His presence available to the disciples in a quarantined room. Some of His last instructions He would leave with the disciples are the following:

John 20:23: If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

Whoa! Those are big words and give the disciples great responsibility. But it's the four words that Jesus declares to them before this that make this possible. He says in John 20:22: **Receive the Holy Spirit.**

What is Jesus wanting to tell us loud and clear through all of His Red Letters? How you forgive others is in direct proportion to your own reception of God's forgiveness! It is hard, if not impossible, to forgive others without first receiving God's forgiveness ourselves.

If you hear, read, or take nothing else away from this book, leave with this nugget from the words of Jesus:

The single biggest key to forgiving others well is found in this truth: A forgiven person is a forgiving person.

You can't give away His forgiveness to others well without first receiving it for you. While I am

100% for reconciliation in this world and for us to be more than gracious to others, the deepest issue we need to solve when it comes to forgiveness is to each personally work on receiving God's forgiveness for ourselves. In fact, in my research, **80-90% of people struggle to receive God's forgiveness or to forgive themselves more than they do to forgive others.**

If the majority of us are still struggling with forgiveness in our own lives, how in the world will we be able to forgive one another?

God's offer of forgiveness is available to all. But, unfortunately, somewhere, between God wanting to give us forgiveness and allowing ourselves to receive it, the enemy comes in and stops this from happening. As a result, many of us are still stuck in bondage rather than doubling down on the freedom God gives to us. That's why I spent over a year of my life writing *Forgiving Challenge: A Life-Changing 40-Day Journey to Freedom*. I want you to continue on the journey to forgive others well, but if you have not taken the time to receive God's forgiveness for yourself, then you will constantly be running into dead ends. Even in trying to do something good on the outside, forgive others; if you have not let God bring freedom to you, you will only end up exhausted and frustrated.

If all of this isn't enough, there was once a time that the disciple Peter asked Jesus a question

about forgiving others. It's found in Matthew 18:21: **“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”**

Looking back at their culture, Jewish rabbis taught that three times was the accepted limit of forgiving someone for an offense. From all accounts, Peter, then, after getting a front-row seat to seeing how gracious Jesus was, really was stretching to consider seven times! He's feeling pretty proud of himself, taking the tradition to forgive three times, then doubling it, and adding one for good measure. Jesus blows his mind with His response, though.

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Depending on which translation you use, it's either 77 times or 70×7 equaling 490 times. All scholars agree, however, that the actual number is not what's at stake here. Instead, what Jesus is issuing with this statement is that the forgiveness we are to give others is unlimited. To further make this point hit home, Jesus offers this parable. A parable is a story meant to teach a lesson about a more significant issue. Jesus often used it to help bring understanding to concepts that are hard to fathom. Let's read it now and interject some comments along the way to help us understand what Jesus is saying. This parable is from Matthew 18:23-35:

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

Did you notice how much the servant owed the master? 10,000 bags of gold. It has been re-translated for us, but if you look into the original text, the actual amount owed was 10,000 talents. A single talent was worth 6000 days of wages, somewhere between 20-25 years' worth of salary. Therefore, 10,000 talents would be worth 60 million years' worth of earnings on the low end. At the average wage in our nation, this would equal more than 3 trillion dollars.

Let me write that out for you.

3,000,000,000,000. Count up the zeroes. There are 12 of them!

To put that in perspective, even if Bezos, Musk, Gates, and Buffett could combine their overall net worth, they wouldn't even get a third of the way there.

We don't know how the initial servant racked up 3 trillion dollars' worth of debt. Jesus wants us to understand the main point: this servant owed a ridiculous debt that would never get paid.

“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’

This servant makes a promise to pay back everything. All he asks is for patience. He speaks as if he were given enough time, he could actually pay back a three trillion-dollar debt. As Jesus is telling the disciples this parable, I wonder if they didn't chuckle out loud. If the servant represents you and me, how laughable it truly is, and how empty a pursuit so many walk along to think that we could ever repay our master with enough time. The preacher Charles Spurgeon once said about this man, “Many a poor sinner is very rich in resolutions. This servant-debtor thought he only needed *patience*; but indeed, he needed forgiveness!”^[5]

The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that the man with all the power just forgave 3 trillion dollars of debt! Who has the power and wealth even to do this? Only God Himself! An incredible, unheard-of pardon and release! Can you imagine the sense

of relief that the servant must have felt being released of this debt?!

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.

Again, we see from the original language that these 100 silver coins were 100 denarii coins. A denarii was not insignificant; one denarii was equal to one day's worth of wages, which in our nation is close to \$200. One hundred of these coins means this was about a \$20000 debt. It is a significant number for sure, but it is 1/600,000 of the debt he had just been forgiven. It was so insignificant compared to what he had just been released from.

He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

You would expect a man who has been forgiven much to be forgiving of others in need. But, instead, you find this man not only unwilling to forgive but assaulting this man. He takes him by the throat and chokes him. Even though the man on his knees

makes the same plea as the former servant, he refuses and even throws him into prison.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Amazingly it wasn’t the 3 trillion dollars of debt hanging over his head that took away his freedom; it was his unforgiveness that resulted in his bondage. His lack of pardon for his fellow servant ended up resulting in his demise. Jesus closes the parable with these words:

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

How well you forgive others is not tied to your salvation. None of our works are connected to our salvation. The point that Jesus is making is that it ought to be impossible not to forgive others for those of us who genuinely have been forgiven. The only thing I can think of as to why this man was so

unforgiving is because he did not fully understand the depth of how much he had been forgiven. He must not have known how big of a price the master paid to cancel the three trillion-dollar debt.

After reading all of the direct commands of Jesus and now this parable from Him, I am more convinced than ever that if we don't want to forgive others, it's because we have no idea how much God has forgiven us.

Don't forget this truth: A forgiven person is a forgiving person.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

We've shared many words from Jesus in today's devotion. Now let's also read the Apostle Paul's teaching around the key to forgiving others:

Ephesians 4:32: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:13: Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

What are five things that you know that God has forgiven you?

Do you feel like you have done anything that God has not forgiven? Explain.

The Bible promises in 1 John 1:9: that God is faithful and will forgive us when we confess. So if you have anything that you need God's forgiveness in your life, bring it to Him now. He's ready to listen. And He's ready to forgive.

Finally, are there any sins you've committed against others that you need to be forgiven of? If so, pray to God today about these sins and what appropriate steps could be for you.

- For a deeper experience leading to your own personal freedom, purchase *Forgiving Challenge: A Life-Changing Journey to Freedom* at this link. Be forgiven. Be free.



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 3**

DAY 3: WHY IS IT HARD TO FORGIVE OTHERS?

You think it'd be easy for us to give away forgiveness to others after how much God has forgiven us. Yet, despite being freed from a debt that we could never repay, many of us still hold onto unforgiveness in our lives. Why? Because forgiving others is still hard! Today's devotion details three reasons why forgiving others is hard.

- 1. It's hard to forgive because forgiveness is unfair.**

In this world, we crave fairness. Probably the first three phrases out of a child's mouth are:

1. "It's mine!"
2. "When are we going to get there?"
3. "It's not fair!"

It is natural for us, as children, but even adults, to want things to be fair. It's why we celebrate when someone finds success after much hard work, grit, and drive. It's why we cringe when we hear of someone achieving success or fortune by sheer luck.

I recently saw a show called "Million Dollar Lottery Home." The show is very similar to the enormously popular "House Hunters," but I had a hard time digesting this show. The show's premise is centered around a realtor helping people who have just won the lottery choose a new home. I struggled to watch it because, in my mind, none of them earned their homes the right way. Instead, they lucked their way into it.

I'm sure you've had some unfair things happen to you in your life. Perhaps you did all the right things and worked harder than anyone else, yet when promotion time came, you got skipped over, and they promoted the unqualified person. Perhaps you should have been the one that made the varsity team. You had put in the work, had an excellent prior season, yet, the kid who had zero talent but

parents who supported the team financially somehow snagged your spot.

Maybe at other times, you were unfairly treated because of your skin color, your gender, your past record, your age, your marital status, your height, your religious beliefs, etc. There is something inside all of us that wants everything to be fair, especially for ourselves. **We are quick to recognize when we've been mistreated but slow to see places and times in our lives where things have been unfair to our advantage.**

We love asking and pondering questions like “Why do bad things happen to good people?” When we ask questions like this, we typically are placing ourselves in the position of the “good” person.

But, remember, you are not a “good” person. On Day 1, we recognized from Romans 3 that there is no one righteous, not even you. A better question to ask in light of this truth, then, is, “Why do good things happen to bad people.” We are the sinners who Christ has redeemed. We should have been at the cross, not Him. Though our sins deserved wrath, God's grace and forgiveness were given to us. **We don't want life to be fair, or hell would be our destiny.** So, the next time we think about fairness and think we're getting the wrong end of the deal, know that in Christ, it is to your advantage that things are unfair.

Thank God that He has treated me unfairly.

Forgiveness is unfair. If you are hoping for fairness, you will never make it in this challenge.

In the parable from yesterday, when the master forgave the servant's debt, the debt didn't just disappear. Instead, the master willingly took the loss! Just as Jesus paid a cost He should have never paid, when you seek to forgive others, you must know upfront that any sin requires a payment. And I just want you to hear these words today: It's not fair that you have to pay for the sins of others. It simply isn't fair.

2. It's hard to forgive others because we are still sinful.

Even though we are living in a world where we are freed from the consequence of our sins, we still are sinful.

The Apostle Paul, after his miraculous conversion to faith in Jesus, pointed this out so eloquently in Romans 7:15, 21-24:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but

I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Remember, this is the great Apostle Paul that is writing these words. He is one of the most influential people in the history of this world. If the great Apostle Paul struggled with this, then so will I, and so will you. This practice of trying to do what is right, truly following Jesus, and yet, being bombarded with sin is a reality all of us will continue to deal with until Jesus returns. Rather than denying this could possibly happen in our lives, a better response is to recognize it. It's through this process that we come back to the answer, which is the Gospel, that Paul ends with, in Romans 7:25a:

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

One of the most inspirational stories of forgiveness in this world is found in Corrie Ten Boom, as told in *Forgiving Challenge Kids*.^[6] Corrie was a courageous Dutch woman who was sent to a concentration camp because she was hiding Jews in World War II. The German Nazis were hunting Jews and sending them to death camps.

Corrie survived the death camp, but her precious sister Betsie did not. Despite the suffering, when the war ended, Corrie went to Germany in 1947 with a message of forgiveness. “When we confess our sins,” she told the people in a German church one day, “God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever.”

After her talk, a German man approached. Corrie was horrified. She recognized this man as one of the brutal guards at her concentration camp. He didn’t recognize her, but he told her he had been a guard at one of these hostile camps. He then said he’d become a Christian after the war and knew that God had forgiven him for the cruel things he did. Then he held out his hand and said the words that Corrie most feared: “Will you forgive me?”

Corrie wasn’t sure she could.

Jesus forgave those who killed Him, but what about Corrie ten Boom? Was she ever able to forgive that guard? In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie says she forced herself to say the words of forgiveness to this guard—and then a miracle occurred.

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

With God's power, Corrie forgave, and it felt as if she had been freed from prison.

Amazingly, though, if you were to continue to read Corrie's story, you will find that even after one of the most incredible displays of forgiveness that this world has seen, she still wrestled with forgiving others for what, on paper, would be far more trivial. Corrie says she still felt angry at her friends and didn't want to forgive at times. But, to continue to forgive, she had to keep going back to God and ask Him to give her the strength to forgive.

The path of forgiveness is not a straight line. It zigs and zags. One day it might come easy, and the next, it could feel impossible. Having success in forgiveness today does not guarantee a smooth sail from here on out.

The Apostle Paul and Corrie Ten Boom are reminding us that as continual sinners, our best response is always to come back to God. Corrie couldn't move past the littler things without going back to God. Without a relationship with God, and a continual abiding in Him, you will find yourself putting in all the effort to climb a mountain but never, in fact, reaching the summit.

3. It's hard to forgive others because the ones that hurt you the most are typically the ones you love the most.

Indeed, there are times when the sins of others you aren't connected with or not in a close relationship affect you.

We've likely all been minding our own business driving when out of nowhere, we get tailed too closely, lights of the car behind flicker at us for no reason, then we get flipped the bird by the complete stranger as they cut us off, narrowly missing our vehicle. At the moment, our blood boils up, and we pray, wish, and hope for a speeding ticket or a jail sentence for this maniac. Thankfully, hopefully, most often, cooler heads prevail, and you move on.

Other sins of a greater magnitude that bring long-term effects are terrorist acts and mass shootings. Many times, the victims are entirely detached from the situation or motivation behind the attacks. But, unfortunately, these things do happen in our world. They are sad, tragic, and utterly horrific.

But, most of the time, the complicated piece about forgiving others is because the ones we are called to forgive are the ones we love the most. They are, many times, people we will still have to do life with to some degree and be in relationship with, in our present and future.

I absolutely love, adore, and cherish my wife. I want nothing but the best for her. She's been more than gracious to me in life, and there is no earthly

prize that can compete with my sweet Allison! I never want to hurt Allison, but there are times in which I have sinned against her. Some of those sins were even blatant and intentional. That's odd to me. I never wake up thinking, "Today, I'm going to sin and intentionally cause harm to Allison." Yet, throughout the days, there are multiple times when I have intentionally caused pain, hurt, confusion, and stress in her life.

Though fewer in number, there are times when my precious Allison has done the same for me.

My wife Allison and I love one another. We made vows to one another. We genuinely want what's best for each other and our family. And yet, we find each other at times in need of each other's forgiveness. Many psychological studies have confirmed that one of the keys to a successful marriage is forgiveness. Not only is this crucial in thriving marriages, but also families.^[7]

Every sin is unique. Forgiving a spouse looks a lot different than forgiving a complete stranger who hurt you. Some offenses and offenders we may be able to "let go" of. Still, what makes forgiving others so hard is that usually, the sins committed against us are done by people we are committed to being in a relationship with. It makes forgiving others complex. We'll try to dive into the complexity later, but for now, let us once again return to God to learn from Him.

We were created for His glory and His good pleasure. We were even formed in His image to be in a relationship with Him. It would be easy for God to just “let go” of us and move on from us when our sin broke that relationship. But, instead, He chose not to give up but to enter in and restore our relationship most unbelievably: by sacrificing His only Son Jesus. Rather than letting us remain distant or become strangers to Him, what did God do? He came towards us first. He did not do this when we were doing everything right. No, Paul says in Romans 5:8: **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** He did not wait for our hearts to turn to Him or for us to clean up our act, but instead, He initiated the action of forgiveness.

We can easily be tempted to give up on those who have hurt us. We are even taught that this would be the wise thing to do in many places in our world.

Nobody denies that forgiveness is hard.

It’s unfair. It comes at a steep price.

1 Peter 4:8 says, **“Love covers over a multitude of sins.”** God’s Word teaches us that sin doesn’t have to end a relationship. While sin can tear relationships apart, one act of love can bring relationships back together.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

All three of the reasons we explored today ended similarly: returning to God. Simply put, **we will not forgive others if we do not remain in a close relationship with God.** So how do we stay in a close relationship with God?

For a couple of years, I studied how Jesus, the only one who has ever existed in a perfect relationship with God, connected with Him. I marked down every particular habit that Jesus practiced or taught about and found what I believe are the five keystone habits of Jesus. While all of us should strive to introduce healthy habits in our lives, it's fair to say that for those who follow Jesus, the habits of Jesus are the most important to emulate.

After we did all the research, here are the five keystone habits in the life of Jesus:

- 1. Committing to Community:** Our community and our friends influence how we live. Jesus chose to be in close community with others from the very beginning of His ministry.
- 2. Studying Scripture:** 10% of the recorded words out of the mouth of Jesus were Old Testament quotations. The Bible helps us understand who God is and who we are in His epic story!

3. **Prioritizing Prayer:** Jesus prayed early, often, and in all circumstances. Any effective relationship starts with excellent communication, and prayer is how we talk with God.
4. **Seeking Solitude:** Even in a hectic season, Jesus took time away from everyone and everything to be with God alone.
5. **Choosing Church:** Though the church today looks different than in Jesus's day, every single day, Jesus would visit the synagogue or temple courts and use His gifts to bless the gathered church.

Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 (1 = false, 10 = true) on the following comments about your life:

1. **Committing to Community:** I have a community of people I have committed to influencing me to be more like Jesus.
2. **Studying Scripture:** I daily read, study, and utilize Scripture.
3. **Prioritizing Prayer:** Prayer is crucial to me. It is the first thing I do, and I speak to God continually throughout the day.
4. **Seeking Solitude:** I seek alone time with God every day in some way, shape, or form.

- 5. Choosing Church:** I attend regularly and am in a deep relationship with those in my church. I contribute my gifts to help my church be a greater, fuller expression of Jesus.

After noting which of the five habits is the lowest in your life, identify and practice one small daily habit to help you accomplish this overall keystone habit more excellently.

- For a deeper experience, consider purchasing the *40-Day Being Challenge: A 40-Day Challenge to Be Like Jesus* at [this link](#). Or, commit to starting with the FREE 11-day *Being Challenge* Bible Plan featured on our partner YouVersion's app here. [Insert Link here](#).



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 4**

DAY 4: ARE THERE OTHER SOLUTIONS TO FORGIVING OTHERS?

One of the highest points of elevation in Florida is in Coconut Creek, FL. A hill that started only 10-feet high a few decades ago is now over 225-feet high. The hill is known as Monarch Hill Renewable Energy Park, and it is, in fact, a giant landfill. I had the opportunity to go to their site to film a video for *Forgiving Challenge* and learn crazy, ridiculous garbage statistics from this particular landfill:

- Every single day, 20 million pounds of trash gets added to the landfill.

- During Hurricane Irma, 3 billion pounds of trash was added to the landfill.

In another 17 years, they estimate the landfill will reach its total capacity and top out at 280-feet high. At this point, they will fully cap it with sand and grass. From there, estimates are that it will take 30 years for the trash to settle.

I was amazed to learn the lengths this company went to collect millions of pounds of trash daily and how conscious they were of their neighboring community. They have put great thought, time, and investment into minimizing the smell, hiding the look, and eliminating any long-term adverse effects of their landfill. Their landfill currently brings power to more than 5000 homes from the gases that the landfill produces.

In my research, I also found out that 70 golf courses, some of them ultra-luxurious, have been built on old landfills in our nation in the past two decades. Human beings have found pretty inventive, creative, and useful ways to deal with our trash. We have learned how to effectively collect garbage and turn a place of garbage into world-class golf courses over time! Like, good job, humankind! Impressive!

But, as inventive, creative, and skilled as we may be at getting rid of our physical garbage, when we try to do this with our spiritual garbage, sin, it leads to

devastating consequences. **The only solution to dealing with the bondage that comes from sin is receiving and giving away the freedom that comes through forgiveness.**

However, that doesn't stop us from trying.

In dealing with conflict, human beings tend to fall into two camps: fight or flight. Some of you may clench your fists, grit it out, or try to get even. This is a fight reaction. Others want to flee the situation by ignoring the pain, pretending like it didn't happen. This is a flight reaction. Every attempt of our own effort to defeat sin, whether it's our own or the sin of others, will always lead to a dead end.

When it comes to forgiving others, the way we choose to fight most often is to seek revenge, and the flight option we choose most often is just to avoid it altogether. But, unfortunately, both revenge and avoidance keep us in bondage.

REVENGE

Human beings crave law and justice. Just look at how many *CSI*, *NCIS*, and *Law and Order* shows there have been. Slap a new city on it (LA, New Orleans, Miami), and you've got viewers ready to eat popcorn and binge. If Netflix is your jam, when you look at the "Top 10 Trending," you're likely to find at least a couple of trial or crime documentaries.

Why? Because we are ruled by law and justice in this world.

But when the justice system of our day fails us or leaves us wanting more, sometimes we tell ourselves the most efficient way to get justice is to seek it ourselves. Nobody knows our own hurt like we do; therefore, in our minds, nobody understands how to bring fairness, equity, and justice into our unfair situations like we do. We are taught to look out for ourselves and to seek our own revenge.

Many scientists have researched what happens in our brains when someone enacts revenge. They discovered that “revenge, at the moment, is quite rewarding...but long-term, has the opposite effect...instead of quenching hostility, revenge prolongs the unpleasantness of the original offense.”^[8]

In *Red Letter Challenge*, I teach the two common approaches to revenge:

1. **Direct Approach:** This approach is simple: If you do something terrible to me, I do something wrong back to you. If you hit me, I’ll hit you. This approach, again, is laced in the media that we consume. We watch movies like *Bourne*, *Taken*, *John Wick*, *Karate Kid*, etc., and celebrate when the one who has been wronged destroys the other party. We will go to a competitive hockey game and grade the

game's success based on whether or not a fight broke out.

- 2. Indirect Approach:** This approach is far less blatant but just as dangerous: If you do something terrible to me, then I will live my life so well in comparison to you that people will laugh at you. You see this sort of revenge often enacted at high-school reunions. Someone made fun of you or bullied you in high school, and now you want to show up at the reunion and display how much greater you are now.

I will repeat this to you. The wrongs that others have done to you are not fair. But you seeking to get even with them will only exacerbate the problem.

Francis Bacon, a famous scientist, and philosopher, once said, "A man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal."^[9] Author Brian Zahnd would go on to say, "It's the lust for revenge that destroys our souls and keeps us chained in a devil's hell of exponential hatred and retribution. The only way out is the imitation of Christ."^[10]

Romans 12 is one of the all-time great practical life chapters in the Bible. It shares command after command after command. Remember, these commands are for our good. The entire chapter starts with this declaration: "**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy....**" Every

day, you will be led right back to where we need to be: with God. When we view the mercy He has in our lives, we choose to act differently. Paul would conclude this chapter, then, after looking at God's mercy, with this encouragement to us, in Romans 12:17-20:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Though heaping burning coals on our enemy's head appears to be contradictory at first, this is referencing an ancient Egyptian repentance ritual. As a sign of being repentant, the guilty person would carry a basin of burning coals on their head. Paul reminds us that it is not through evil that positive change will come, but instead through kindness. As disciples of Jesus, we want all injustices to come to an end. What brings an end to injustice is repentant hearts. What brings us repentant hearts is kindness. Paul doubles down with his final words in this great chapter, from Romans 12:21:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Brian Zahnd, the author of *Unconditional*, says, “Forgiveness is not about a complete rejection of justice, but rather it involves the transfer of that justice to God.” ^[11]**The reason we can choose to reject revenge is because we trust in God’s justice.** We think, and are taught, that we know how best to avenge for ourselves, and right the wrongs of others done to us, but that is a lie. God knows best. God is far more just than you will ever be.

AVOIDANCE

Having a front-row seat in ministry for a decade has given me multiple opportunities to witness how people deal with conflict. One of the things I have been most shocked by is the number of times people have an apparent conflict between them but avoid talking about it at all costs.

When we minimize or try to altogether forget about the sins of others and their consequences in our lives, many of us feel like we are doing the right thing. But, in reality, this is a ploy of the enemy that we fall for. **One of the most consistent lies that the devil tells us is that sin really isn’t that big of a deal.** But, as we said earlier, every sin has a cost to it. Therefore, sin needs to be dealt with appropriately. If we continue to avoid

it, it will likely cause an inappropriate response or reaction.

All of us have had that one thing in the fridge before that has become contaminated. If you do nothing with the contaminated food, it will not only make your entire fridge smell, it will then work its way into the kitchen and the rest of the house. Many of our lives are reeking with the consequences of avoiding dealing with sin.

One time my son said something that just really angered me. It was a small thing. A tiny thing. And I just totally blew my top. I yelled. Really loud. And I threw a new Publix sub on the ground in my anger. The moment didn't justify my ridiculous reaction. Moments later, I was ashamed. I asked for forgiveness, and my family granted it to me. This angered moment was unusual for me, and they were very receptive to my confession. Reflecting on why I had so much anger at that moment, it turns out it wasn't the one thing that he said. This one thing just happened to be the tip of the iceberg. It had been things he had been saying for over a week, multiple times, that each time hit me in a small way. I avoided having the conversation with him and just kept stuffing what he was saying. Finally, I could take it no longer. Had I said something in the very beginning, I could have avoided a ridiculous tantrum. This is what happens when we avoid offenses. We end up living with it, blowing it up in our minds, and eventually acting out and becoming a person we never wanted to be.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, “*Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done, or putting a false label on an evil act.*”^[12]

One of the reasons we may avoid having hard conversations with others is because we have been incorrectly taught about anger. We ought always to be angry about sin—our own and others. Bottling anger inside of us sounds noble, but it simply isn’t helpful.

James Averill is a psychology professor who embarked on a significant study revolving around anger. He believed that anger had become misunderstood. The results of his well-known study were published in *American Psychologist*. Averill says:

“Anger is one of the densest forms of communication. It conveys more information, more quickly, than almost any other type of emotion. And it does an excellent job of forcing us to listen to and confront problems we might otherwise avoid.”^[13]

While part of the forgiveness process has to deal with removing anger towards the offender, nowhere will you hear me say that you cannot ever be angry in this challenge. How to be appropriate with our anger can be a blurry line, but letting our anger boil up inside of us is a line we ought never to cross. That’s why the Apostle Paul wrote these words for us in Ephesians 4:26: **“In your anger do not sin.”**

Our future is at stake when we seek revenge to make someone pay for their sin or when we avoid the consequence of sin altogether. By seeking revenge, we end up compromising our own integrity and doing things we never wanted to do. By avoiding forgiveness, we end up filling up on the inside with anger, which leads to hatred, bitterness, and resentment. If you choose either one of these options or any other version of unforgiveness, it will limit your future. Think about how many people in your life that you won't be in a relationship with again, places you will never visit, or situations you won't walk into because of unforgiveness.

We see both fight and flight at play in the original sin of Adam and Eve. Directly after their sin, they felt shame and went into hiding (flight). Then, when confronted with their sin, both parties blamed others. Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve and even tried to blame God (fight). Amazingly, despite this, we see God's grace at the very beginning. He not only forgave their first sin by clothing them with the bloodshed of the first animal but also promised that one day He would destroy the devil himself and his weapon of sin.

What do we see in this story?

God will fight for us. We do not need to fight for Him. He'll win the battle. He will enact His justice.

We don't need to flee from God. In fact, we can't. He knows where we are. He will come to find us and restore us.

This same God who brought us justice by not only fighting for us but finding us in our brokenness now calls us to go and do likewise.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

Are you more naturally inclined to fight or flight when it comes to conflict? Explain.

Have you ever enacted revenge, and if so, how did it make you feel afterward?

Have you ever avoided conflict, and if so, how did that approach make you feel?

Do you have anyone in your life that is hardest to forgive right now? Who and why?

Your challenge today is to do something kind for this person.



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 5**

**DAY 5: CAN I TRULY EVER FORGIVE
LIKE GOD?**

In *Red Letter Challenge*,^[14] I introduce you to Simon Wiesenthal. Simon was an Austrian Jew imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. He worked in a hospital where a young German soldier named Karl Seidl was about to die. Seidl's last request was to talk to a Jew. Any Jew. Karl had been mortally wounded and wanted to make a deathbed confession. For several hours he pours out his heart about how sorry he is for everything he has done. He mentions people he has killed,

and Simon personally knows some of the victims are his family and friends.

After hours of confessing, Seidl asked if Wiesenthal could forgive him. In his book *The Sunflower*, Wiesenthal asks:

“Ought I to have forgiven him? Was my silence at the bedside of the dying Nazi right or wrong? This is a profound moral question that challenges the conscience of the reader of this episode, just as much as it once challenged my heart and mind... The crux of the matter is, of course, the question of forgiveness. Forgetting is something that time alone takes care of, but forgiveness is an act of volition, and only the sufferer is qualified to make the decision. You, who have just read this sad and tragic episode in my life, can mentally change places with me and ask yourself the crucial question, ‘What would I have done?’”^[15]

Wiesenthal sent this request to prominent thinkers, philosophers, and writers. The rest of his book is a compilation of 53 responses weighing in their thoughts on whether he should forgive the man. 28 of the authors said forgiveness was not possible, 16 said it is possible, and 9 were unsure. Interestingly, author Brian Zahnd notes, “The sixteen who were in favor of some form of forgiveness were all Christians or Buddhists (thirteen Christian and three Buddhists). Among Jews, Muslims, and Atheists who responded there appeared to be

unanimity in agreeing that an offer of forgiveness in this situation was impossible.”^[16]

Why did so many Christians believe that forgiveness should be extended? In light of Christ’s forgiveness, we are called to forgive. **We see from Jesus that no situation or offense is outside the realm of forgiveness.**

But can we truly ever forgive as God has forgiven us?

Let’s examine in further detail how exactly God has forgiven us. How does God forgive?

The best answer is to look at Jesus. Jesus is the revelation of God. We know Jesus’s death on the cross was the payment to bring us into a right relationship with God. But what about in the normal day-to-day? Because Jesus was a human, He, too, was hurt by others. Since Jesus began His ministry, He was constantly on the run. He was disrespected, persecuted, and hated by those He was trying to save. He dealt with petty arguments from His friends. One of His closest allies, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus by selling Him into the hands of the enemy for a mere 30 pieces of silver.

Hebrews 4:15 reminds us: **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every**

way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. So the next time you think you are alone in your suffering, remember that Jesus is with you.

There are many great offerings of forgiveness by Jesus, but the most personal story is how Jesus forgave Peter. Peter, the right-hand man of Jesus that had been entrusted with so much, would flat-out deny Jesus at a time when Jesus could have used any friend. Despite this tragic event, Jesus would ensure that Peter was forgiven. He would lead Peter through 5 Freedom Phases, as outlined in *Forgiving Challenge: A Life-Changing 40 Day Journey to Freedom*.^[17] The 5 Freedom Phases are organized using the acronym SCARS:

Sin: The admission price to freedom begins with an admission of our sin.

Confession: Jesus invites us to a practice of confession. An essential truth about this practice of confession is that anytime, anywhere, Jesus has already positioned Himself towards us.

Absolution: The death of Jesus on the cross was the one-time cancellation of debt for all sin!

Restoration: Jesus is ridiculously interested and passionate about bringing us to complete restoration. He proves He's not angry with you with an invitation not to let the sins of your past affect who He has called you to be in the future.

Sanctification: Jesus's total forgiveness includes the opportunity to live the free, abundant life with Him. He not only invites us into that life but promises to walk with us and work through us.

If we are genuinely going to forgive as Jesus forgave us, then we should walk through a similar process to those who have wronged us. Below are the steps it could look like to truly forgive someone who has hurt you:

Sin: We acknowledge that sin has taken place. Every sin has a cost to it, and that cost must be paid. Since we have been forgiven of our sin, we agree that we will forgive those who have wronged us.

Confession: Just as Jesus will hear our confession and forgive us, so too will we do the same for those who have wronged us. More important, however, is the fact that we will not wait for others to come to us, but rather, we will initiate and posture ourselves before a word of confession is given.

Absolution: We will not seek repayment or revenge but will take on the debt ourselves, no matter the cost and how it affects us. We will cancel the debt that is owed to us.

Restoration: We will help those who have wronged us see that they have a great future. We

will not hold their past sins against them or force them to pay us back over time.

Sanctification: Not only will we invite those who've wronged us into a free and abundant future, but we will do our best to walk with them until it is accomplished.

If you are like me, you have two reactions right now:

1. Wow! I'm so grateful that Jesus has forgiven me in the way that He has.
2. Wow! It's going to be really hard to forgive others as Jesus has forgiven me.

Not only do I have these reactions, but immediate questions like the following come to mind:

- Is there a difference between how God forgives me and how I should forgive others?
- Are there times when to truly forgive like Jesus may be more harmful than helpful?
- Shouldn't I have appropriate boundaries set in place for those who have hurt me?
- Do I really need to stay in a relationship with those who have hurt me?

As you look at how God has forgiven you and then how you forgive others, you may be confident in some areas and doubtful in other areas. For example, you might be in a place where you are willing to forgive someone, but there is no way you would initiate the conversation. They need to say the words “I’m sorry” first. Or you might actually be okay with canceling the debt that someone owes you, but the anger you feel towards them is still and will continue to burn hot. You might be in a place where you don’t have ill will towards your offender, but the thought of walking hand-in-hand with them is repulsive.

Because we live in a broken, fallen world, each of these reactions, questions, and thoughts are valid. Every person and every situation is unique (we’ll look more at those truths tomorrow). It’s essential to recognize where you are today and what direction you are heading.

A baseball hitter will fail more than they succeed. A Hall-of-Fame career is usually associated with those who get it right only 30% of the time. But they keep practicing over and over and over again. When it comes to forgiving others, keep walking through the process. Keep wrestling with the concepts. Though you will never fully attain to the standards that Jesus laid out, keep putting in the effort. As Dallas Willard says, “The path of spiritual growth in the riches of Christ is not a passive one. Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.”^[18]

As much as it is possible in this world, we strive to be as much like Jesus. How we forgive is no exception. This is the great opportunity and responsibility we will have in this world. We will never be perfect, so we shouldn't expect our efforts of forgiving others to be perfect. We will stumble, and we will fall at times. We will have moments where we get it right. But we won't ever be 100% perfect. **Every time we fall short of even the act of forgiveness itself, God has forgiveness for us.**

The point is not to beat yourself up over this but simply recognize that this is a lifelong process to forgive like Jesus. It's a lifelong process that you will never get perfect. So give up on the idea of being perfect. When you utterly fail from the start, or when you take great strides in the process but can't fully finish, trust that God's grace is there for you again and again and again.

The question we are asking today is somewhat of a trick question. While we can strive to forgive like Jesus, we will never be able to forgive like Jesus. Only Jesus, a perfect and sinless man, could die on a cross, rise from the dead, and pay the ultimate consequence of all sin. You can't do that. I can't do that.

So, yes, in as much as you can forgive like Jesus, do so.

And as you try, be reminded that God loves that you are trying to forgive like Him. He loves that you are on this journey with Him right now. The very fact that you are looking to His Son Jesus and trying to become more like Him puts a smile on His face right this instant. He's happy with you!

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

Examine the 5 Freedom Phases of SCARS. Think of a particular hurt that has come from sin against you. Acknowledge that sin and the person who committed this offense through the five steps by answering the following questions:

Sin: What is the sin, and who has hurt you?

Confession: Are you willing to put yourself in a posture to give this person forgiveness for their sin? Would you be willing to do this even if the person is unwilling to admit any wrongdoing?

Absolution: What is the tangible, practical cost to cancel the debt of this sin? Will you pay for it?

Restoration: Do you still have anger or hatred towards the offender? Or are you willing to invite them to move fully forward without the weight of the sin against them?

Sanctification: Are you willing to walk or work together with the past offender into the future?



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 6**

DAY 6: HOW DO I FORGIVE?

Thus far, we have learned the key to forgiving others through Jesus. We have understood the process of how God forgives us, and we have learned how any other solution outside of the forgiveness of Jesus is an empty pursuit. So today, I want to get very practical and share the first steps towards forgiving others.

When offense comes, these are the first three steps to take:

1. Examine your own heart

While I have yet to find concrete evidence to support this claim, I have often heard that the most often-quoted Bible verse is not John 3:16, but instead Matthew 7:1. The verse reads, **“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”** Or, the way it’s often quoted through the King James Version, **“Judge not, lest ye be judged.”** It is so often quoted because not only do Christians know it by heart but so too do non-Christians. But, unfortunately, it is also one of the most misunderstood verses in all of the Bible.

Here is the full context of what Jesus says in the following verses, Matthew 7:2-5:

“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Jesus is pointing out what so many of us naturally do. Rather than focusing on our own sins and living out of the freedom that comes through God’s

forgiveness, we so quickly want to look at the faults of others who have “bigger issues.”

Through humor, and I would even say sarcasm, Jesus is telling us that the sins of others are like a speck in their eye compared to a plank in our own eye. Have you ever gotten a speck in your eye? Or had a little bug flown into your eye? If you are like me, it’s incredibly annoying, and you would do everything you can to get that bug out of your eye. Can you imagine, considering the lengths you go to rinse a speck out of your eye, the lengths you would go to if you were literally walking around with a plank in your eye? If you had a plank in your eye, not only would nobody take your words seriously, but you wouldn’t dare talk about someone else’s minor issue. Unfortunately, you’ve got your own problems to deal with.

Interestingly, Jesus addresses both being “judgmental” and “hypocritical” in this section. This is fascinating because these are the two most common words to describe Christians by non-Christians.^[19] Jesus is using this example to remind us how important it is, comparatively, to spend time thinking of our own sin than dwelling on the sins of others.

You might think, then, that I am proposing that we ought not ever judge anyone. That’s not what Jesus says, and that’s not my interpretation. Jesus is simply reminding us of this truth:

We ought always to examine ourselves first before we judge others.

2. Examine the one who committed the offense

Over the past decade, to be more inclusive of all types of people and religions, we've noticed more businesses, stores, and individuals have switched from saying "Merry Christmas" to "Happy Holidays." This change has created quite a stir! Several years ago, along the same lines, Starbucks released a plain red cup, and a segment of Christians from all over the country lost their minds. Some Christians went so far as to boycott the establishment. I looked at the cup, and my first reaction was, "That's a clean, nice-looking red cup!"

It's not Starbucks job to tell people, "Merry Christmas." God didn't ask Starbucks to be His representatives in this world. It's their job to serve quality coffee. And while some would disagree on their quality, their numbers and revenues prove otherwise. I was embarrassed at the way the Christians reacted to this scenario. Why would Christians get so angry at a coffee establishment for not saying "Merry Christmas?" How could we get so easily offended at something like this?

If we continue to look into God's Word, we see the Apostle Paul also writes about judgment. He is

writing to the church in Corinth that was dealing with all sorts of immorality. Though having many issues of its own, the church was associating itself with many who were not living up to the standards that Jesus had laid out. Paul then says this, in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13a: **“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.”**

Paul reminds us to trust in God’s justice system for those who don’t profess faith in Jesus. But, for those who are Christian, we have a right and responsibility to judge. Pastor Andy Stanley once said, **“Judge the believin’, not the heathen.”** We need to hold our Christian brothers and sisters accountable for their actions, just like you need to be held responsible for yours. The Church, filled with Christians, is called to be the greatest and fullest expression of Jesus in this world. Unfortunately, sin stops us from being the best that we can be. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate, coming out of the right heart and motivation to work to fully restore our brothers and sisters who have erred.

Again, coming back to my own life, I desire to do my best to represent Jesus well. If I have sin in my life that you see, I want you to tell me. Nowhere in my pursuit to follow Jesus well would I want you to tell me that I am perfect, that I have everything together, and there is nowhere I can improve. While those words may feel good for me to hear,

they are dangerous for me to believe. The world may be pushing us towards using those words for everyone, but they aren't true for anyone.

I find it so ridiculous, and truthfully, humiliating, at some of the things non-Christians do that many Christians take offense to. Starbucks never signed up to follow Jesus and live by His rules. I wish that Starbucks signed up to follow Jesus. I wish that everyone did. But they didn't. Even if they did, I'm not even sure that they "sinned" by producing a red cup. We can't hold non-Christians accountable to the Christian standards when they never signed up for in the first place.

Don't hear me wrong. It's sad when any offense comes. And indeed, there are some things that non-Christians do that are extremely serious and cause deep hurt and pain. But, while not excusing their actions or behaviors, we need to recognize that many people have not signed up to follow Jesus. For us to hold them to the standards that Jesus has requested is not our job.

In our pursuit to forgive others, it's essential to recognize who the offense is coming from. **Who the offense comes from dictates a different response.** The offenses of those in the Christian faith require a different response than those who never signed up to follow Jesus.

Let me be clear. Sin is sin whether the person is a Christian or a non-Christian. We are called to forgive everyone whether they are Christian or not. Every act of sin requires forgiveness, but how you forgive could be different based on if they profess a faith in Jesus or not.

3. Examine the response needed to the particular offense

Let me point out the obvious: **We become offended in this world because offenses happen.** Sin came into the world through Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God. Ever since then, disobedience has spread. As a result, we all have hurts and pains that we must forgive. Offenses come in all shapes and sizes. Though any missing of the mark is labeled sin and disqualifies us from being in God's presence, the reality is that in this world, not every sin is created equal, nor should be treated equal.

Not every hurt and pain in your life needs forgiveness.

After we have examined ourselves and who the offense comes from, the next step is to recognize what the offense is. We must sort out our hurts and decide which ones need forgiveness. A big piece of the journey to forgive others starts with recognizing what offenses need forgiveness. My wife Allison gives us categories in her book *Forgiving*

Challenge Kids to help us sort them out. She uses the terms bumps, stings, and deep cuts.^[20] This is not the first and won't be the last time I borrow her words!

She describes them as follows, and I'll give a quick example in each one to help you understand.

Bumps: A hurt that was disappointing but no one's fault.

After breaking a Guinness World Record for the longest speech ever (you thought your pastor preached a long time?!), I was on cloud nine! Several months had passed when a great friend informed me that a man from India had broken my record. I had no idea and was bummed to lose the world record. My friend didn't try to hurt me at all, he didn't say it rudely, and it certainly wasn't wrong for the man from India to break my world record. Yet, I was still disappointed for a moment. But, I didn't need to forgive anyone. No one had sinned.

The more I reflected on the situation, I was grateful that I had the opportunity to break a World Record in the first place. The fruits from the event, raising enough money to purchase a home to help those struggling with addiction, were the main point of the World Record attempt anyway. We had accomplished our goal, and that ministry is still thriving today.

Stings: An offense that hurt for a little while, but you were able to move past it pretty quickly.

I had just written my first book *Red Letter Challenge* and gotten my very first church to sign up for an all-in 40 Day Challenge. I shipped the first 200 books to them only to discover that more than half of the books never got delivered. The ones that did were highly damaged. For the coming months, I literally received “Return to Sender” boxes back that were completely empty. When I went to get a refund for my postage, I was not treated well. I lost my temper in the moment, not understanding why those at fault wouldn’t take responsibility. A shouting match in the post office ensued. After a few minutes of back-and-forth, I remembered that I was not only a witness for Jesus, but I was a local pastor losing my mind in a post office. I apologized for losing my temper, and he also apologized for saying things against me in the heat of the moment.

I never got what I felt was fair from that moment. But, in reality, what happened that day didn’t alter or change my life dramatically. Instead, I learned an important lesson or two that has helped me ship thousands of packages that have arrived safely and on time.

Deep Cuts: An offense that likely causes long-term hurt and ongoing consequences and is hard to move past.

Have I told you about this gas station that ripped me off yet?! Okay, just kidding. That's not a deep cut by any means!

We've all had things done against us that have caused long-term effects. Typically, but not always, the deep cuts come from those who are closest to us. The deep cuts of others may include any combination of the following: lying, cheating, stealing, betrayal, infidelity, rape, murder, pornography, abuse, neglect, abandonment, etc. These things really hurt and typically cause long-term damage. Even after forgiveness, the cost of these particular sins could carry on. For instance, if you are the boss and someone has stolen from you, you have every right to fire your employee. You may choose to cancel that person's debt and not hold it against them, your anger may have even subsided, but the long-term consequence of their stealing could have resulted in them no longer having a job.

Nearly everyone agrees that forgiving others is something we should do, but not many people will tell you how to do it. So while tomorrow we will get even more practical, today, I wanted to show you that depending on what the offense is, who the offender is, and the part that you may have played in it, not one act of earthly forgiveness will look the exact same.

Allison says, "If you gather every hurt into a pile and then try to throw forgiveness over the whole

thing like a blanket, you won't know which hurts are deep wounds and which hurts can be easily ignored. You need to sort them...sin is like a monster on the loose, and you wouldn't ignore a monster if it was tearing apart your house, would you?"^[21]

It is my hunch that most of us reading this book struggle not with the bumps, and likely not even the stings, but the deep cuts. These are the deep and hurtful sins that have caused wounds that probably haven't fully healed.

Thankfully, from a heavenly perspective, there was one ultimate act of forgiveness that paid the price for every single one of your sins, my sins, and the sins of others. As we said from the beginning, sin has a cost to it. Jesus's death on the cross was the one-time act that brought us back into a right relationship with God forever.

Jesus took deep cuts that left scars on his body. He had nails pierced through His hands and feet, a crown of thorns on His head, deep slashes on His back from a whip, and was even pierced in His side by a spear. He took on those deep cuts so that you and I could be deeply forgiven. Long before Jesus was born, Isaiah reminds us of this Good News in Isaiah 53:5b: “...**by his wounds we are healed.**”

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY:

Think about some hurts that you have caused or received in the past. Sort them out in the chart below. Then, spend time in prayer asking God to forgive those hurts you are still wrestling with.

Use the chart on page 56 of FC Kids for Design.



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE DAY 7

DAY 7: PART 2, HOW DO I FORGIVE?

Because every situation is not cut-and-dry or black-and-white, it makes how to forgive others very complicated. If ever the wisdom of God is needed in our lives, it is required when it comes to forgiving others. We cannot tackle any aspect of forgiving others without God. Unbelievably, our God does not withhold His wisdom from us.

James not only got a front-row seat to the life of Jesus, but he was bed bunk partners with Him. The brother of Jesus would write these words to encourage us, found in James 1:5: **If any of you**

lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

The reality is that every one of us has to start the forgiveness process somewhere. I have found that many Christians have good intentions in life, but few match their intention with any sort of well-thought-out plan. The same is true when it comes to forgiveness.

Intention without Jesus-centered precision leads to confusion.

Think about this. There has never been a time in our history that we have had as much information about forgiveness. And yet, I believe there is great confusion on this topic. Confusion happens, by the way, when we try to answer spiritual questions without taking precise aim at Jesus.

If we desire to be like Jesus, then, again, our plan should be precisely, squarely aimed at Jesus. This is the wisdom that should be front-and-center in all things in our lives. Wisdom personified is Jesus. Therefore, in all things, it is wise to look at all spiritual matters through the lens of Jesus.

Intention with Jesus-centered precision leads to transformation.

The reason you likely are reading through this book is because you need help forgiving others. Despite all the information out there about how to forgive, you still have questions about forgiving others. Or maybe even your efforts at forgiving others in the past haven't been successful. So, with humility and an understanding that any man-made attempt to make the ugly effects of sin into something clean, I ask you to use the acronym SCARS to help you forgive others. Even the word SCARS is a reminder that, though a scar could leave an ugly mark, scarring is a necessary part of the healing process for our bodies. Because this is how Jesus has carefully, beautifully, and methodically forgiven us, why not try it in our pursuit to forgive others?

Today, we will explore each phase in greater detail and make a few critical observations as we go along. First, I urge you to think about someone in your life that has wronged you and needs your forgiveness. Secondly, though, let us not get arrogant. In this process, I also encourage you to think that there may be someone else out there reading this book thinking of you and the offense that you committed.

SIN

As we said yesterday, it is crucial in this part of the process to identify who missed the mark, how it was missed, and any role you may have played in the process.

I've done enough marital counseling for couples to know that there are typically three sides to every story involving conflict—his, hers, and the truth somewhere in the middle. Rarely, and I mean really rarely, is it one person's fault entirely. This part of the process acknowledges what the offense is and who the offender is. Perhaps we categorize the offense into the “bump, sting, or deep cut” category.

Some sins have a one-time cost, while others have an ongoing cost for them to be appropriately dealt with. Therefore, it is appropriate at this stage of the forgiving process to acknowledge how the mark was missed and the effects that this particular sin has had in your life.

CONFESSION

The two aspects of confession we see in Jesus are stunning.

1. Jesus promises us that when we confess, He will forgive us. 1 John 1:9 says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** Just as Jesus would forgive us when He hears our confession, would you forgive your offender if you listened to their confession? If you knew they had a contrite heart and were genuinely sorry for their offense, would you be able to say the

words “I forgive you?” On Day 9, we’ll explore if we can give forgiveness to someone who will never confess.

2. Jesus initiates the possibility of forgiveness even before we bring our confession to Him. It’s one thing to wait until the offender comes to you. It’s another to go to the offender with kindness. Remember, while we were still sinning, Jesus came into this world to die for us. When we were dead in our trespasses, Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit. When His friend Peter denied even knowing Him, Jesus cooked Him breakfast. As you think about your offender, are you more prone to wait until they prove themselves or say the right words? Or are you willing to posture yourself towards them without any promise of a contrite heart that would lead to confession?

ABSOLUTION

Jesus paid the eternal price for our sins when He died on the cross. Every sin has a cost to it. Certainly, in this world, some sins have a greater cost to them than others.

While the cost of forgiveness is never easy, it is the cost we are required to pay if we are to truly live up to the name Christian. The invitation to follow after Jesus gives us meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. Those are the rewards, the benefits, but it

comes at a high cost. Here are Jesus's words to describe what following after Him truly looks like, from Luke 9:23-25:

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?

After an offense has been committed against you, it's appropriate to ask what the offense against you costs? Have you already paid for this? Or will this need to be something you pay off in the present or future? Finally, then, will you absorb the blow? This certainly is not fair, it will not be easy, and it could alter or change your life to have to pay for the sins of others.

RESTORATION

I'll put my own cards out on the table here. Truthfully, this is where forgiving others starts to feel extremely difficult, if not impossible. It's one thing for me to pay the debt that someone else should have paid, but I should at least be able to hold that cost over the offender, talk negatively about the offender to others, or be angry forever at the offender, right?

The Buddhist spiritual principle of karma is a concept that gets tossed around and is primarily celebrated. It is the idea that “what goes around comes around.” The actions that a person performs now will decide their fate in the future, whether that is in this existence or a future existence. Karma highlights retribution (another form of indirect revenge from Day 4) and entirely opposite God’s forgiveness. By believing in, holding onto, or wishing karma against your offender, you are doing what is natural but not what God desires. **Karma is the exact opposite of grace and ought never to be celebrated by followers of Jesus.**

Jesus was a master restorer. Not only did He pay the price for your sin, but we see that through His forgiveness, He sought complete restoration. Jesus gives this invitation to follow after Him to Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, the Samaritan woman at the well, the adulterous woman thrown at His feet, the Prodigal Son, and even Peter. Each of these people had done actions that should have disqualified them from such a high honor. Yet, Jesus not only sought to make their relationship right before God through His payment on the cross, but He invited them along the journey to follow Him closely. He desired a relationship not just eternally, one day in heaven, but a real relationship right now.

Do you still have anger or hatred towards the offender? Or are you willing to invite them to move

fully forward without the weight of the sin against them?

SANCTIFICATION

The definition of sanctification is “the process of being freed from sin.” In our walk with God, Jesus invites us to follow after Him, and, to help us, He gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. The Holy Spirit not only gives us the faith to believe, the power to make a difference, but fills us with this impressive list from Galatians 5:22-23a: **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

Jesus not only gives us the gift of forgiveness for our sin but the invitation to follow Him. He then fills us with the gifts and fruits needed to make an impact in this world. Not only is God not angry with you, and not only does He not require you to “payback” your sin, but His generosity continues to give you everything that you need. **Jesus is not only interested in you being freed from the consequence of your sins but freed to live filled with meaning and purpose.**

Are you willing to walk with the past offender into the future? Are you willing to continue to be generous towards the one who has offended you?

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY::

The last two days have explored very practical tools to help you forgive someone. Today, your challenge is to practice this forgiveness by writing a letter to the person you most need to forgive. If you need help outlining your letter or are struggling with where to start, use the three pointers on Day 6 as well as the five Phases on Day 7 to help guide you.

In this letter, I don't want you to hold back. I want you to be honest, vent if you need to. Share the pain that their sin has caused. Writing a letter like this can be a very therapeutic exercise. After writing the letter, pause and spend time praying to God about this letter. Finally, unless otherwise guided in your prayer time, I encourage you to tear your letter up as a physical sign of "canceling the debt."



FORGIVING OTHERS CHALLENGE DAY 8

DAY 8: DOES FORGIVING MEAN FORGETTING?

One of the most shocking displays of modern-day forgiveness is laid out in the book *Amish Grace*. Tragically, on October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts IV “carried his guns and his rage into an Amish schoolhouse near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. Five schoolgirls died that day, and five others were seriously wounded.”^[22] Directly following the shooting, the gunman turned his pistol on himself to take his own life. This horrific injustice came crashing into a community that often-times feels isolated from the world around it. Even

determined efforts to avoid injustices and remain separated from the world are not foolproof.

Unfortunately, school shootings are becoming less shocking and more normal in our world today. In a nation where school shootings have piled up, however, this one is memorable. Not only because of who was on the brutal receiving end, but because of how the Amish responded. As the authors of *Amish Grace* point out, “the biggest surprise at Nickel Mines was not the intrusion of evil but the Amish response. The biggest surprise was Amish grace.”^[23]

The Amish realized quickly that the killer left behind a family, including a wife and three children. The Amish community sought to find Amy Roberts, the killer’s wife, only hours after the killing to comfort her. That night, they went to the killer’s father’s house to hold and comfort him. And in the days following, the Amish community would continue to go above and beyond. The Amish children befriended the killer’s daughters. More than half of those in attendance at the killer’s funeral were the Amish community. Not only were they there to show support to the family, but a wall of 30 Amish men and women, some of whom were parents of the victims, formed a wall to block the media cameras. The Amish community would even encourage the family not to move away but to stay near their community. A relative of one of the victims told the Associated Press, “I hope they

[Roberts's widow and children] stay around here. They'll have lots of friends and a lot of support."^[24]

Ten days after the shooting, the Roberts family released a public statement thanking the local Amish community: "Your compassion has reached beyond our family, beyond our community, and is changing our world, and for this we sincerely thank you."^[25]

In the aftermath of the shooting, news reporters and satellite dishes filled this once-quiet community. This particular shooting struck a unique chord with the nation and world. As the eyes of millions were looking in on this story, the news stories began documenting the horrific tragedy. But over time, the news started shifting away from the tragedy and focused more on the Amish's response of forgiveness.

As onlookers surveyed the situation, many were inspired. The Amish Community were named the Most Inspiring People of 2006 by BeliefNet.^[26] This story allowed people to see a different response than vengeance, anger, and hatred. It became an incredible modern-day witness of what forgiveness in the face of tragedy looks like. The parents of one of the girls who died said, "It is only through our faith in Jesus Christ that forgiveness is possible. He is the one who deserves all praise and glory, not us Amish."^[27]

Others were confused. How could they forgive something so tragic so easily? This is where on-lookers missed it. Forgiveness is never easy. It's hard. Even though the action of the Amish community from the outside makes it appear simple, cut-and-dry, it wasn't then, and it still isn't today. It's impossible to forget this tragedy for the Nickel Mines community.

The Amish, more than a decade later, are still choosing to forgive consciously. They are still looking after the killer's family despite dealing with the pain from the event. The Washington Post details more than a decade later how one of the victims of the school shooting is now "a 16-year-old girl who sits immobile in her wheelchair, unable to speak or feed herself."^[28] Another victim, the oldest boy in the classroom that day, is now "a 23-year-old man who sits at his kitchen table, also struggling to speak, though for him it's not because he isn't physically able. He just can't find the words to express the emotional pain he's felt every day for the past ten years."^[29]

The Amish community will never forget this injustice that came into their community. However, the Amish have decided to forgive. They have chosen to cancel the debt of the consequence to the best of their ability. But just like anyone else, they have to wrestle with the consequences, the emotions, and the acceptance of the tragedy still every day.

There seems to be much confusion, even amongst those who profess a faith in Jesus, connecting forgiving and forgetting. For example, if I have forgiven someone, but I still can remember what they have done, have I truly forgiven them?

We forget many things in this world: where our keys are, what our password is for a particular site, an important anniversary, or the birthday of a loved one. But what about the sins of others?

Let's explore what God's Word declares about this topic.

One of the most-often quoted Bible verses to justify this position is found in Isaiah 43:25, when God says: **“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers our sins no more.”**

A vital teaching of the Christian faith, however, is that God is omniscient (all-knowing). If God indeed remembers our sin no more, if He has erased that memory, then wouldn't that put into question our doctrine that God is omniscient? Either He remembers no more, or He is omniscient, but He can't be both. Uh-oh. Did we find a mistake, or an error, in the Bible? Did the Bible contradict itself?

Of course not.

When the Bible references God remembering our sin no more, what it is referencing is that God has chosen to act as if it no longer occurred despite God knowing our sin.

My first name is Zachary, and it comes from the Hebrew word “Zakar,” which is often translated as “remember.” So my name literally means “God has remembered.” A fuller definition, however, of the Hebrew word includes “to be mindful, to recall, to bring to remembrance, to still think on, etc.”^[30] There’s a difference between forgetting something and choosing not to be mindful of that particular something.

In Genesis 6 and 7, God instructed Noah to build an ark to keep his family and pairs of animals safe from a flood that would destroy every other living creature. Amazingly, Noah was faithful to this project. Eventually, when the floodgates of heaven were opened, all were destroyed, except for Noah, his family, and the animals on board the ark. The floodwaters had now filled the earth for 150 days, when in Genesis 8:1, it says that, “**God remembered Noah...**” I think we can all agree that God never forgot Noah. He simply chose to be mindful of Noah by remembering His covenant promise with Noah. When God “remembers,” it means He acts according to His promises in a way that will be evident for all who see. And in this specific case, He does this by officially closing the floodgates of heaven.

When the Bible says that God will remember your sins no more, that does not mean He has one of His angels use a memory eraser thingy and POOF! God's memory is wiped clean. God can recall every little detail in history. He has a far greater memory than you and I do. This means that when God forgives you, He is choosing not to treat you the way you deserve.^[31] He won't hold a grudge against you. He won't dwell on your sin or cause it to come to His mind again.

**“God is sheer mercy and grace;
not easily angered, he’s rich in love.
He doesn’t endlessly nag and scold,
nor hold grudges forever.
He doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve,
nor pay us back in full for our wrongs.”**

Psalm 103:8-9 (*The Message*)

Rather than forgetting, forgiveness remembers the wrong and still chooses not to act in a way that would harm the other person. Remember, in both aspects of forgiveness, there is a “releasing” or “letting go of.” The canceling of the debt is often settled with an outside action, but the elimination of anger and hatred towards the offender is a release on the inside. While God may be permanently able to “let go” of His anger towards the past sins that

have been paid for at the cross, for us, it's a lifelong process.

I don't want anyone to think you aren't a forgiving person because you still remember an action against you in the past. That is a lie from the devil that too many are listening to and believing. **The truth is the very fact that you remember and continue to choose not to treat the actions of others as they deserved is an even stronger testament to your faith.** If it is humanly possible to forget something, then there would be no need for forgiveness. You can't forgive something you have forgotten. My friend Kent once told me, "It takes more grace to forgive and remember than it ever does to forgive and forget."^[32]

Brian Zahnd says, "Christian forgiveness does not call us to forget. Christian forgiveness allows us to remember but calls us to end the cycle of revenge... Jesus's vision is to end the ugliness of revenge and make the world beautiful through grace."^[33]

When we miss the mark, God calls us to come to Him and receive forgiveness. He grants it to us every time. But, it would be foolish for me to forget my sin completely. No, I should remember my sin. I should learn from my sin. I should know how I can position myself better in the future to not repeat my sin.

For instance, If I know I have struggled with alcohol addiction, it would be wise to remember this. That would encourage me to find a sponsor to help me when I may be tempted. Not only do I set myself up better to be a greater representation of Christ in the future, but when I remember my mistakes of the past, it allows me to remember the grace of God all the more. The last thing I would ever want for your own life is to forget how good God has been to you.

When we remember the grace of God, we not only ensure that we are living out of the right motivation, but it allows us, then, to be gracious towards others.

Forgiveness is not about keeping score but losing count.

When we see how much God has forgiven us, we then become forgiving of others. But we should be careful not to forget the sins of others entirely, especially in cases where the sins of others were intentionally harmful to us and where those sins have been repeatedly done against us. While we can forgive those sins, it is wise to learn from them and not place ourselves in intentional danger. Sometimes the sins of others against us require us to put up healthy boundaries to guard us in the future. This is not only for our benefit but for theirs as well.

Instead of memory-erasing, God remembered our sin and placed it on Jesus. The Apostle Paul says that Christ erased **“the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.”** Colossians 2:14 (ESV) King David says, **“as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”** Psalm 103:12

Through God erasing our sin, He has allowed our names to stand forever written in eternity. He gives us the power to forgive what we remember. Don't forget that.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY::

How has God's grace and His choosing not to treat you as your sins deserve helped you?

What are the most painful sins of others done against you that you can't forget?

Are there any past sins done against you that you still bring to mind that you want to treat as they deserve? What sins? Why?

Can you choose to remember the sins of others against you and not treat them the way they deserve?



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 9**

**DAY 9: HOW DO I FORGIVE
SOMEONE WHO ISN'T SORRY?**

I spent much of my childhood years growing up in Nebraska. I moved to Nebraska in the mid-1990s and got to experience the Nebraska Huskers football program win three national championships within my first four years. While the past two decades haven't been as kind, the history of this program is ridiculous. It has 905 total wins, making it the 7th most of any program. ESPN's College GameDay analysts call the Husker fanbase the best in the nation, citing their loyalty, sportsmanship, and knowledge.^[34] They have the current and still

ongoing record of 375 consecutive sellouts.^[35] On game days, the attendance in Memorial Stadium would make it the 3rd largest populated city in the entire state.^[36]

Much of the success or failure of a college football team falls on the coach. For over 36 years, Nebraska was fortunate to have two Hall-of-Fame coaches: Bob Devaney and Tom Osborne. However, when Tom Osborne left the coaching position in 1997, the program has never quite bounced back to the prominence that it once had. Since 1997 it's had six different head coaches.

The other day, I ran into a fan that didn't care for one of those coaches. She believed that his tenure put the football program back many years, and because of how vital the program is to not only the state but her personally, I remember hearing the words out of her mouth, "I will never be able to forgive coach's name." I know her well enough to know that while she wasn't 100% serious that there was a tinge of truth in it.

Her phrase got me thinking. If she is holding unforgiveness, who is that still affecting? It's not affecting the coach. The former coach doesn't even know who my friend is. He has already found another job and moved on. For various reasons, I can guarantee you, the coach will never say the words "I'm sorry" to my friend.

While this is a silly example, it points to a reality that we will deal with in this world. Sometimes there have been wrongs done to us or that have affected us from a person we will never hear a word of confession from or experience any act of contrition on their part.

As we have detailed already, every sin is unique. Therefore, every act of forgiveness will be unique. On Day 6, we referenced how unwise it is for Christians to hold non-Christians to the standards of the Christian faith. While we wish that every person would sign up to follow Jesus, it's not the reality. Therefore, because we have a different worldview, we will not agree on whether a particular action or inaction is even a sin. There are some offenses done against us that we think were sinful that others will disagree with.

Jesus reminds us that because we are His followers, we do not operate with the same standards of those in this world, when He says in John 18:36 NLT, **“My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”**

What do we do when our offender isn't sorry?

The Christian faith is about trusting God. Sometimes this trust in God means doing what

He's called us to do no matter the outcome. It's why we preach the Gospel and proclaim the Good News even though not all will receive it. It's why in faith, we proclaim healing in a person's life even if we don't see the healing result. It's why we pray even when we don't see God move. And it's why we choose to forgive others in all circumstances.

Here's the truth about following God: **Obedience is our responsibility. Outcome is God's responsibility.**

Let's return to the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:18: **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

Paul is declaring that we are to do as much as we can and go as far as possible to pursue peace and reconciliation. There are times, though, when even in doing as much as you can and going as far as you can, it still will not change or affect the person on the receiving end.

There are times when it simply isn't possible to live at peace with everyone. For example, situations where abuse, molestation, and violence are occurring are times when it's impossible to live at peace. Situations like these require wisdom from God. Many times, this wisdom results in putting up healthy boundaries to protect the innocent and defenseless.

You can't control the actions, feelings, or emotions of others. But you can control your response. Remember, forgiveness is not about controlling the other person the way that you want them to; forgiveness is about you letting go of the offense, no matter how your offender responds.

Allison shared an incredible story related to this truth in *Forgiving Challenge Kids*^[37].

Anthony Ray Hinton was convicted of a murder he never committed and was put on Death Row. Anthony sat in silence and misery. He hated his life and was angry. But after three years, he accepted that this was going to be his life. He decided that as long as he was on Death Row, he would find a new way to live.

Anthony was wronged by many in this process. And, sadly, the system and the people involved in the system who wronged him wouldn't listen. They wouldn't change. Long before he got out of prison, he decided that he would change his own life despite their response. He chose to bring happiness to others, remembering that God loves and forgives him.

According to Anthony's book, *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row*, he faced the jury during his trial and told them, "Jesus was prosecuted, accused falsely for things he didn't do, and all he did was try to love and save

this world, and he died and suffered. So if I have to die for something I didn't do, so be it. My life is not in the judge's hands. My life is not in your hands, but it's in God's hands."

Anthony not only changed his own life, but he worked to improve the lives of 54 other inmates around him who were also on Death Row.

Twenty-eight years later, in 2015, justice finally came late. Anthony was found innocent.

Anthony could have been very bitter when he got out of prison. After all, he spent 28 years in jail for something he never did! But, instead, he would continue to forgive the people who falsely accused him. Incredible! He could only forgive because he knew Jesus had forgiven him.

Jesus set him free long before the courts did.

When we hold onto unforgiveness, we will continue to live in bondage. The sins of others against us can hurt us at the time of the offense and continue to bring harm to us when we choose not to forgive. Anthony's story shows us that we can experience freedom when we let go of the offenses of others.

When others don't see their wrong, don't understand your perspective, or simply can't or won't ever admit their fault, trust that Jesus sees you. He knows you've been wronged. He empathizes with

you. Even if injustices against you never get settled in this world, trust in God's justice. Know that you will be greatly rewarded in heaven for any offenses that you forgive in this world.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY::

Have offenses been done against you that you feel like your offender will never admit their fault? If so, list the sins and offenses below.

Have you done everything you can possibly do to live at peace with each of these offenders?

If not, what could you do?

Are you living with peace with all of your offenders?

If not, say this prayer today:

Dear Jesus, I am sorry for all of my sins. Those of which I know. Those of which I don't even know. I receive your forgiveness for all my sins. I am a sinner. You are my Savior. Out of the grace you have won for me, I choose today not to let the sins of others hold me back any longer. I am letting go of the offense. No matter how my offender responds, I am letting go. As I let go of this offense, hold me ever tight. Help me live in the freedom that you have won for me. Amen.



FORGIVING OTHERS
CHALLENGE **DAY 10**

**DAY 10: WHAT DO WE LEARN
THROUGH FORGIVENESS?**

The second-most-powerful man in the world had the opportunity to finally enact vengeance on people that had left him for dead. He had the power, the motive, and the opportunity. Yet, instead of enacting revenge, He granted forgiveness.

Joseph was the 2nd youngest of 12 brothers but the apparent favorite son of his father. Jealousy was rampant from his brothers, and Joseph did little to help his cause. He was a dreamer without a filter. In his dreams, he would be led to positions of power

over his brothers and family. Then, outwardly he would boast about these dreams to his brothers. Finally, his brothers got sick of his antics, and they began conspiring. Initially, they made plans to kill him but eventually settled on selling their brother into slavery.

If that weren't bad enough, despite Joseph following the direction of God, he would find himself continually being mistreated and descending lower and lower. Eventually, he ended up serving time in prison for crimes he didn't commit.

Amazingly though, if dreams got him into trouble, dreams also got him out of trouble. The most powerful man in the world was the King of Egypt, known as Pharaoh. The king had a crazy dream that no one could interpret. Finally, a worker of Pharaoh remembered that God had given Joseph a gift in interpreting dreams. Joseph was brought before Pharaoh and heard his dream. Joseph interpreted what the dream meant. He told Pharaoh that there would be a seven-year season of great abundance in Egypt, followed by a seven-year season of an even worse famine.

Because of his interpretation, Pharaoh could see that Joseph was a man of wisdom and in tune with God, so he granted Joseph to not only get out of prison but to become his right-hand man. Joseph would lead efforts to store up grain in the seven years of abundance so that when the famine came,

everyone would have what they need. Joseph managed this national project. Sure enough, when the dream became a reality, Egypt increased in influence and prosperity. People from all around the world would come to purchase grain under Joseph's leadership.

Some of those people that would land at the feet of Joseph were the very brothers who sold him into slavery! Twenty-two years had passed since this ugly incident. Yet, amazingly, through an act of grace, Joseph not only supplied grain for his brothers and his family, but he would forgive them and invite them to come and live with him.

Then, several years later, his dad Jacob died. His brothers feared that Joseph was only kind in receiving them back because of his love and affection for his father. They start thinking that maybe Joseph is still holding a grudge and will now pay us back. They ended up writing up a fake letter like it was from their dad Jacob. The letter urges Joseph to forgive them. Joseph could see right through this and began to weep. Then, with the brothers not trusting the forgiveness that Joseph had already given to them, they fell once again at the feet of Joseph.

In this world, when we think an outcome could go either way, we'll say there could be a 50/50 chance. This might have been how the brothers felt. They weren't sure. Maybe he will destroy us.

Perhaps he will be kind to us. Instead of a 50/50 chance, Joseph teaches us a 50/20 Perspective, aptly named because it's located in Genesis 50:20:

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

What is the 50/20 Perspective?

The 50/20 Perspective is looking back and seeing that even in injustice, God's purposes will prevail.

Joseph forgave his brothers long before they showed up at his doorstep the first time, 22 years after their offense. By letting go and releasing them, he was able to pursue his future without any limitations. Joseph was able to use all of the injustice done against him in his past to help save the lives of countless others in his future.

The enemy wants to destroy you with the sins of others. But, if he can keep you unforgiving, he has you right where he wants you. I'm amazed at how many times those who give forgiveness to others are able, like Joseph, to use the wrong, unfair, and hard situations that could have destroyed them to help instead save others. All of us likely have offenses done against us in our story that may have been excruciating to endure, but somehow, in some way, we can see God's hand at work.

One of the most inspirational people I've ever met is Rebekah. On April 15th, 2013, Rebekah and her then 5-year-old son Noah were cheering on the racers at the finish line of the Boston Marathon. Noah was getting antsy, so Rebekah corralled him, and he ended up sitting on her feet. At that moment, bombs exploded just a few feet away from where they were, and their lives were changed forever. Rebekah's leg was literally on fire, and she was sitting in a pool of blood, believing that she was just moments away from dying. In the chaos that ensued, Rebekah fought for her life. Through God's provision of many courageous firefighters, law enforcement officers, doctors, surgeons, and nurses, she ended up winning that battle. Also, amazingly, because Noah was seated on Rebekah in the way he was, her body ended up acting as a shield to save his life.

This tragic event cost Rebekah and Noah a lot. Despite more than 71 surgeries to date, Rebekah did lose her battle to save her leg. She now lives with an amputated leg. Not only this but both Rebekah and Noah had PTSD.

But even in the midst of all of this horrific injustice, Rebekah began gaining a new perspective in life. Similar to Joseph's experience where he would one day face his offenders, in March of 2015, Rebekah faced the last living bomber in court. She gave her testimony and read an impact statement of how this crime had altered her life. She said, "Though

you desired to take my life from me, this moment has made me more alive than ever.”

In 2017, Rebekah wrote a book entitled *Taking My Life Back*. Then, in 2018, she and her newly married college sweetheart Chris launched a new non-profit called Rebekah’s Angels. Its mission is to bring mental health treatment to children and families suffering from trauma, and you can find out more about them at www.rebekahsangels.org. Their work has now brought mental health to hundreds of children, and their impact is rising exponentially. Rebekah is now also a public speaker specializing in teaching people how to turn obstacles into opportunities.

This past Easter, I had the privilege to baptize Noah. It was a huge celebratory day that represented God’s faithfulness even, and especially, against sin. Again, I was reminded of the Bible verse that says, “Mercy triumphs over evil.” The things that the enemy throws at us to destroy us pale in comparison to the grace that God has given to us.

Every situation is unique. You may never be able to look back at your situation and see anything good that has come out of it. And for that, I’m genuinely sorry. But the worst thing you can do is to carry the punishment of those sins with you. God has His eyes on the whole picture, and we can trust that if in this lifetime we can never look back and see God’s beauty, that one day we will see Him in all

His glory. His ways and thoughts are higher than ours, and we trust that in the promise of Romans 8:18 that says, **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”**

In both Joseph and Rebekah’s life, we see free people. People whose eyes have been opened uniquely because of a great injustice. Either one of them could choose to live with bitterness, rage, anger, or hatred. But, instead, they’ve decided to let go, to release, and to move forward.

We can never predict the outcome of how sin can be overcome, and sometimes situations aren’t cut-and-dry, but **God can bring beauty out of even the ugliest pieces of your story.**

Rather than Rebekah seeing her amputated leg as an obstacle, she’s using it as an opportunity. She’s gone so far as to name her amputated leg and post funny viral videos of using her amputated leg in crazy ways. She even discovered that her family can come up with some pretty outrageous Halloween costumes that always make people do a double-take.

Don’t let the obstacles that have hurt you in the past continue to be obstacles for your future.

It’s not worth your future to hang onto the debts of your past. Without forgiveness, you

will limit your future and miss some beauty that God wants you to see. You can't control others, but you can control your response. You can choose to let go, however painful that cost may be, and trust in God's perfect justice.

Forgiveness keeps us moving forward.

So, keep moving forward. Learn to live with a 50/20 Perspective. Know that it's not always a straight path. We still live in a world that is beautiful but also broken and messy. We even contribute to this brokenness. Our efforts to forgive others won't be perfect. We will stumble and fall, but it is a noble pursuit in this world to forgive as God has forgiven us. And when we fail, to come back and pick up the grace that God won for our lives.

May we never forget that all of the injustices of the entire world were thrown upon Jesus on the cross. The cross was the weapon that the enemy intended to deal the final blow to Jesus. And when Jesus died and said "*Tetelestai*," which means, "It is finished," I'm sure the devil laughed. But the only thing that was finished was the payment for sins. For when Jesus rose from the grave on Easter Sunday, He dealt the final blow to the devil.

The cross, meant to kill, became the instrument of our victory.

When we forgive others, we do what Jesus did at the cross. We turn the weapons that are against us and flip them on the enemy.

What's your perspective?

The sins of others will not take me down, will not defeat me, and will not limit my future any longer. Instead, they will allow me to fully embody Jesus in a world that so desperately needs Him.

I'm choosing today, with the power of the Holy Spirit alive in you, to live with a 50/20 Perspective. And I'm joining Jesus, Joseph, and Rebekah and turning the weapons against me towards the enemy.

To God be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

CHALLENGE FOR THE DAY::

Is there any offense or injustice that has occurred in your life that has given you a 50/20 perspective?

Throughout this 10-Day Challenge, we have learned about forgiveness through Jesus, both in what He said and how He acted. The goal of this book was to help you become a more forgiving person. We've answered some big questions around forgiveness and shown some practical steps to take towards forgiveness. Today, your challenge is to do what this ebook has been leading you to do from the beginning:

Forgive someone you haven't forgiven.

CONCLUSION

Forgiving others is not a one-time act. It is a life-long process. As important as it is to decide on a plan and then act on it, I leave you again with one last point. It is Jesus's main point. **You cannot forgive others well without being forgiven well.** If you are still wrestling with how to receive God's forgiveness or how to forgive yourself, take the next 40 days to discover the freedom that comes from God's forgiveness. Go to www.forgivingchallenge.com and learn how beautifully, graciously, carefully, and specifically God has forgiven you.

Hear these words of absolution today:

I forgive you in the name of the Father, through the blood of Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, continue to go, and give that forgiveness and the freedom that comes through those words to others.

ENDNOTES

[1] Mayo Clinic Staff. "[Forgiveness. Letting Go of Grudges and Bitterness.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[2] "[A New Generation Expresses Its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[3] Zahnd, Brian. *Unconditional?* Charisma Media, 2010, p. 6.

[4] Souders, Beata. "[The Importance of Forgiveness in Marriage and Relationships.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[5] Guzik, David. "[Matthew 18—Qualities and Attitudes of Kingdom Citizens.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[6] Zehnder, Zach and Allison. *Forgiving Challenge Kids*. Red Letter Living, 2021, pgs. 66-69, 187.

[7] Souders, Beata. "[The Importance of Forgiveness in Marriage and Relationships.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[8] "[The Psychology of Revenge: Why It's Secretly Rewarding.](#)" Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Zahnd, Brian. *Unconditional?* Charisma Media, 2010, p. 25.

[11] Zahnd, Brian. *Unconditional?* Charisma Media, 2010, p. 65.

[12] [“On Inauguration Day, Inspiration from Martin Luther King, Jr.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[13] Duhigg, Charles. [“The Real Roots of American Rage.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[14] Zehnder, Zach. [Red Letter Challenge](#). Red Letter Living, 2018, p. 108.

[15] Ibid, p. 109.

[16] Zahnd, Brian. *Unconditional?* Charisma Media, 2010, p. 8.

[17] Zehnder, Zach. [Forgiving Challenge](#). Red Letter Living, 2021, pgs. 17-18.

[18] Willard, Dallas. [“Live Life to the Full.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[19] [“A New Generation Expresses Its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[20] Zehnder, Zach and Allison. *Forgiving Challenge Kids*. Red Letter Living, 2021, p. 52.

[21] Ibid, Page 55.

[22] Kraybill, Donald B., et al. *Amish Grace*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 5.

[23] Ibid

[24] Kraybill, Donald B., et al. *Amish Grace*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 45.

[25] Kraybill, Donald B., et al. *Amish Grace*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 47.

[26] [“Amish Community of Nickel Mines Honored as Most Inspiring People of the Year.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[27] Kraybill, Donald B., et al. *Amish Grace*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010, p. 51.

[28] Itkowitz, Colby. [“Her son shot their daughters 10 years ago. Then, these Amish families embraced her as a friend.”](#) Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[29] Ibid.

[30] “[Bible Tools: Greek/Hebrew Definitions - Zakar](#)” Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[31] Zehnder, Zach and Allison. *Forgiving Challenge Kids*. Red Letter Living, 2021, p. 159.

[32] Thanks Kent Adcock!

[33] Zahnd, Brian. *Unconditional?* Charisma Media, 2010, pgs. 12 and 19.

[34] Schulte, Brandon. “[ESPN’s commentators call Husker fans best in the nation.](#)” Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[35] “[Wikipedia – Memorial Stadium \(Lincoln\)](#)” Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[36] “[The Boneyard – The Official Student Section of Husker Athletics.](#)” Web. Accessed 1 Oct 2021.

[37] Zehnder, Zach and Allison. *Forgiving Challenge Kids*. Red Letter Living, 2021, pgs. 118-119.

