

Forgiveness

Sharon Anne Ulloa

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All of the stories related in this book are true, but names have been
changed to protect the privacy of the people mentioned.

Excerpts from *Thank You for Forgiving Me*

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Forgiveness

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Thank you...

*...To my wonderful husband and children,
For inspiring me to keep going...*

*...And to my heavenly Father,
For giving me the strength to do it.*

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Preface

One specific incident I have experienced brought forgiveness to a very prominent place in my life. It is a complicated yet delicate situation that involved many people, but primarily it concerned a person named Leslie. As the book progresses, you will learn more how my experience with Leslie opened my eyes about forgiveness, returned me to a close relationship with the Lord, and helped me write a song that I pray will minister to many people for the glory of God.

Why I Wrote This Book

I wrote this book with some multi-faceted purposes in mind:

- To give a brief explanation of what forgiveness is and why we need it
- To help you begin a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, if you haven't already done so
- To help you find forgiveness from God if you have done wrong
- To help you receive forgiveness from someone you have hurt
- To help you if you don't feel you need or want forgiveness
- To help you forgive someone who has hurt you
- To help you if you are having difficulty forgiving yourself
- To help you forgive God for the circumstances in your life
- To help you to move ahead in a positive lifestyle once forgiveness has taken place.

I pray that this book, based on the Scriptures that practically saved my life, will do just that.

About My Experience

Believe it or not, in the years my ordeal spanned, I was subjected to every point on this list, though not necessarily in that order. However, because the details of what happened are not as important as what I learned from them, I will give only the information necessary to illustrate the points I am conveying.

It is my deepest hope that what I have learned from these painful experiences will help those who desperately need to give or receive forgiveness, and possibly help others avoid the same mistakes I have made. Perhaps even more importantly, it is my prayer that every person can be reconciled to and be at peace with God, each other, and ultimately, themselves.

About The Bible

When I was young, I thought the Bible was just a storybook with fictitious characters and situations written primarily to entertain or teach morals to children. As time went on, I learned that not only is the Bible more real and historically accurate than any book on Earth, it is the inspired and 100% infallible Word of God!

I have many reasons to make the claim that the Bible is the most wonderful Book in the world, but I don't want you to take my word for it. If you don't have a Bible, it is crucial that you get one, and learn how to use it, and read it consistently. Most churches will give you a free Bible if you need it. I also encourage you, at your own pace, to become part of, and tithe in, a local church.

I would also like to challenge you to look up the chapters and verses I have listed in this book and highlight them in your Bible for future reference if you find them especially helpful.

I thoroughly enjoy observing how the truths in God's word are consistent throughout both the Old and New Testaments. As much as possible, all of the Scripture will be listed in order from the earliest to the latest books to demonstrate and emphasize the total cohesiveness and perfection of the Bible.

To illustrate my points, at times I may use a single verse of Scripture, at other times I might use an entire chapter if I feel it is necessary. I highly encourage you to go slowly and read the entire passage or series of passages carefully so that each truth will penetrate your heart, mind, and soul.

About this Book

For the sake of continuity, I believe it will be most beneficial if you read this book from beginning to end and simply skip the sections that do not apply to you or your unique situation.

There are many characters, stories, and parables in the Bible that have to do with forgiveness which can be used in different chapters of this book. From time to time, you will see Part I, Part II, Part III, and so on in the subject headings to illustrate that we will return to that particular theme later on.

I have created activities for you to complete in various chapters (listed as Activity #1, Activity #2, etc.). They were designed to assist with illustrating the different aspects of each topic, and they are very important. Please do not skip over them. It might be helpful to have a special notebook to write down your answers to the questions and specific thoughts you might have and refer back to them from time to time as the need arises.

Romans 8:28

Incredibly, a situation that I thought would bring nothing but pain and destruction has brought unexpected benefits to all of the people involved in ways that I never could have imagined or planned. As I was writing this book, things were unfolding around my eyes relating to this situation that strengthened my faith in God, and reinforced my understanding of this verse:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

From time to time throughout this book, you will see the subject heading **Romans 8:28** to let you know that I was living through one of those moments.

More Thoughts

Studying about forgiveness in the Bible has opened my eyes to how precious life is and how important we all are to God. I am humbled that you are giving me the opportunity to share what I have learned with you. If you have been blessed by this book, feel free to share what you have learned with others.

The Bible has so much to say about forgiveness and righteous living, and this book merely scratches the surface of it all, but I hope it will be a good starting point for your daily study of God's Word.

May God bless you on your spiritual journey!

Blessing and honor and glory and power

Be to Him who sits on the throne,

And to the Lamb, forever and ever!

Revelation 5:13

Introduction

Why is Forgiveness Important?

If we are to speak about forgiveness, we must discuss why anyone would need forgiveness in the first place. Would you need to forgive someone who hasn't done anything to hurt, offend, or anger you? Obviously not. We will always struggle to extend forgiveness to those who have caused us pain.

Activity #1 – The Angry Stranger - Questions

Imagine this: you are walking in the mall, when all of a sudden an angry person walks right up to you, elbows you in the ribs, and just keeps walking. Think about how you would feel about the whole situation, then answer these questions:

1. How would you react?
2. Would you expect an apology?
3. What if they didn't give you an apology?
4. Would you shout at the person or retaliate physically?

In a later chapter, we will address your answers to this activity.

When we think about pain, we usually focus on our physical injuries. All human beings have the ability to feel, and although some of us get hurt more easily than others, it is natural for us to feel hurt at one time or another. If the stranger in the mall hurt you by barreling into you, imagine if it was someone you loved? What if they didn't elbow you, but they instead they said something that hurt you? Emotional pain can be just as painful as the physical, or perhaps even more so. Emotional scars can be some of the most difficult to heal.

Pain will always bring some sort of a reaction in our physical bodies, whether an internal or external one. Because we do not like pain, and because we are also equipped with a memory that can remember when we have been hurt, we come up with ways of dealing with our pain. Some of the ways may be:

Internal

Blame ourselves
Hide or deny the pain
Ignore the offender

External

Lash out verbally
React violently
Seek revenge

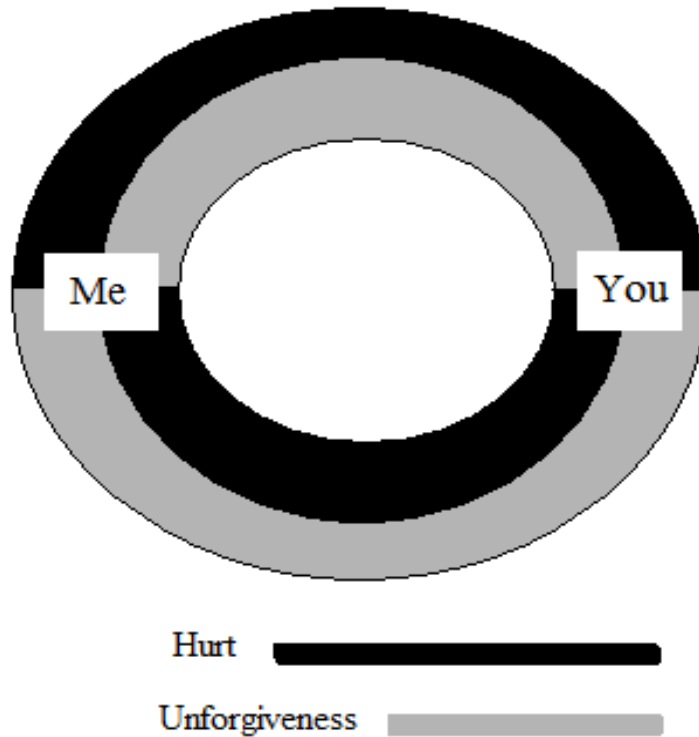
Whether we use an internal or external method, we are in serious danger of hurting ourselves or others, and none of them will solve the problem; they will only make things worse.

There are many symptoms of what the lack of forgiveness has done to our society. Some of them are:

- Lawsuits
- Road Rage
- War
- Domestic violence
- Divorce
- Broken families
- Divided Churches
- Homicide
- Suicide

The following illustration simplifies the cycle of unforgiveness between people:

The Cycle of Unforgiveness



For example, if I hurt you (intentionally or unintentionally), chances are that you will not forgive me unless I apologize (and even if I do, I am not guaranteed forgiveness). The unforgiveness that lives in your heart will turn into pain that will cause you to retaliate and hurt me in return. Moreover, because you hurt me, I will not forgive you unless you apologize. (Sound familiar?) My unforgiveness will eat me up and cause me to hurt you back. What if neither of us apologize? We will probably just keep going around and around in circles like this until we die; unhappy and unforgiven.

What is Forgiveness?

Aside from love, forgiveness is the second most important theme in the Bible, and it is extremely important to God. The definition of forgiveness is to pardon, to release from punishment, or excuse. Do you know what we did to need God's forgiveness?

Adam and Eve, Part I

Adam and Eve, the first man and woman of Creation, lived in paradise in the Garden of Eden:

And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Genesis 2:9, 16-17

The serpent tempted them with the first sin; to disobey God:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:1-5

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve both fell:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:6

As a result of Adam and Eve choosing to disobey God, they caused all of their descendants (including us) to need forgiveness from things we do against God or others, which are called “sins”.

You might reply, “I didn’t eat the fruit, they did. Why should I be blamed?” If we really think about it, if any of us were Adam or Eve, chances are that we probably would have fallen, too. It may have taken a little longer, or perhaps it might not have occurred in exactly the same way, but it is a very good possibility that we, too would have fallen in the Garden of Eden if we had been given the same set of circumstances.

The Ten Commandments

After thousands of years, a man named Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt to camp beside Mount Sinai. As listed in Exodus 20:2-17, the Ten Commandments are God’s laws (or list of sins) that Moses brought down to the children of Israel. They are:

1. *You shall have no other gods before Me.*
2. *You shall not make for yourself a carved image.*
3. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.*
4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*
5. *Honor your father and your mother.*
6. *You shall not murder.*
7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
8. *You shall not steal.*
9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
10. *You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.*

Most of us know that violating any of the Ten Commandments is a sin, but there are many thousands of God's laws in the Bible. Sin is not only *doing* things that God commanded us *not* to do, but also *not* doing things we *have* been commanded to do, anywhere in Scripture.

Heaven

Most of us would probably say that we would like to go to heaven when we die. Who can get there? Is it the people who keep most of the Ten Commandments? The answer to all of those questions is "no". Only people who are the equivalent of sinless perfection are eligible for entry into heaven. James 2:10 says:

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

James 2:10

The Bad News

Even if you have never murdered, committed adultery, or stolen, if you ever used God's name in a way other than to worship or pray to Him, disrespected your parents, lied, or wanted something someone else had, you are a sinner.

It is a fact that, no matter how hard any of us try, we can never keep all of the commandments in the Bible. Because of our sin nature or "flesh", it is very difficult, if not impossible, for us to always choose right over wrong. Nobody who is a sinner can ever get into heaven, and no amount of "being good" will ever get you there.

Ever since the Fall, we have been attempting to get things right with God. The Hebrews were commanded to sacrifice animals in order to cover their sins from God's sight, but their sins were never taken away.

The Good News

Jesus – Part I

Thousands of years after Adam and Eve, a baby named Jesus was born in a little town called Bethlehem:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Jesus came to Earth to take our sins away. When he was 30 years old, Jesus went to a man named John the Baptist to get baptized in the river Jordan. John said:

...“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 1:29

The night before He died, at what is now called “The Last Supper”, Jesus told his disciples:

“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Matthew 26:28

Throughout the Old Testament, it was foretold that Jesus would come to earth and die on the cross for our sins. He did it because He loved us.

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

If you want to go to heaven, there is a way for you to get there. Salvation comes from confessing Jesus is Lord and believing in Him.

...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9

We cannot get saved by our good works or by “doing right”, but we can only get saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For some of us, it might be very difficult for us to believe. “Just believe in Jesus?” “No keeping the Commandments?” “No good deeds?” Even though those things are wonderful, and they will come more and more naturally in time as a believer, Jesus made it very clear that He was the only way to God. He said:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

If you realize that you need God's salvation from your sins, please say this prayer:

“Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and that I have done things that are not pleasing to you. I confess that You are the Son of God and that You came to this world to die for me, shedding Your blood and rising from the dead so that I can be free from sin. Please come into my heart as my Lord and Savior, and take away all of my sins. I want to have a personal relationship with you, and live for you from this day forward. In Your name I pray, Amen.”

If you said that prayer, or one similar to it, and meant it with all of your heart, congratulations! You are now saved! You are not only forgiven by God, but God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the Lord now live in you.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1 John 4:15

The conclusion of this book will list many more of the wonderful things that are yours as a believer in Christ.

What if you are not yet willing to commit your life to Christ? What if you are so angry with God about what has happened to you or the circumstances you are enduring that you are not willing to submit your life to Him? I encourage you, beloved reader, to continue to read this book in its entirety. I pray that by the time you finish reading it, you will change your mind and decide to follow the ways of life and new beginnings that are only found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Part I

Getting Forgiveness

Chapter 1

God, Please Forgive Me!

Before I go any further, if you are not a believer, or have never heard the gospel of Jesus, it is imperative that you read the introduction of this book. Many things I will speak of from this point on may not make much sense unless you know about the saving grace of Jesus. However, if you are my brother or sister in Christ, or at least know what it means to be saved, I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to tell you a little about my story.

Like many people, I had some difficulties in my childhood. Because I suffered from low self-esteem, I made some pretty unhealthy choices in my teen years. Thanks to the Lord, I became a Christian at 17, and by my early adulthood, I felt pretty strong in my faith. I still had some issues, but all in all, things were going pretty well. I was overjoyed that I had read the Bible all the way through, I was involved in various ministries, and I felt like my relationship with the Lord was getting better every day.

Another Christian, named Leslie, hurt me very deeply. I still don't know why Leslie did what they did; perhaps they weren't aware that what they were doing was hurting me, maybe they had so much pride that they weren't able to see what they were doing, or it just could be that they weren't equipped with the tools necessary to fix their behavior.

Even after I repeatedly told Leslie that what they were doing was hurting me, they were unwilling or unable to change it. Leslie would apologize, but the next day or next week, their behavior went back to the way it was before.

As each day went by that Leslie was still hurting me, I allowed a seed of discontent and unforgiveness to enter my heart. That seed grew and grew until it bore the fruit of an offense that I committed against them. It started out small, as most transgressions do, but like a weed, it quickly spread and grew out of control. I gave up on my friendship with Leslie. Even worse than that, I gave up believing that God loved me. In essence, I believe that for a time, gave up on Him, too.

At first, my principles and my emotions were battling each other, and I cried almost every day. However, I felt so justified in my unforgiveness, and so self-righteous about the decision I made, that I just kept moving right along in the path I carved for myself.

Slowly but surely, my uncertainty deepened and I thought to myself, “This happens to other people, not to me.” On Christmas Eve that year, I was in my bed crying and praying to the Lord to forgive me. Within 15 minutes, the prayer became a poem. It began:

*I'm sorry that I let you down
I just want to make you proud
Though I don't feel worthy of your love
You love me anyhow.
Sometimes I feel so helpless
All I can do is cry
But when you hold me by the hand
I can lift my head up high*

Within 2 months, the poem turned into a song. I was told by one person that it was like one of David's laments, and that it would minister to many people someday. Being an amateur musician, and because I thought God was going to strike me down because of what was happening, I feared the song would never see the light of day. I filed the song away, thinking about it from time to time, but feeling nothing would ever come of it.

Gradually, as my actions grew worse and worse, my heart started to grow hardened and cold. I was sad, tormented, and confused all at the same time. I carried on in all of my ministries, trying to put on the appearance of happiness, but I felt completely dead inside. I knew I had no right to teach others about God when I was a picture of iniquity, but I did it anyway.

Although I was "saved", I was deliberately engaged in wrongdoing. Certain this meant that I forfeited my place in heaven, and I eventually resigned myself to the fact that I was going to burn in hell. This is how I felt:

*For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draws near to the grave.
I am counted with those who go down to the pit;
I am like a man who has no strength,
Psalm 88:3-4*

One day, the truth came out, and Leslie confronted me about everything. My heart seemed to stop. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't believe that what I had hoped would never be known was out in the open, revealing my shame. I fully expected to receive retaliation in return, and I gripped my hands in fear just waiting to see what pain I would have to endure at Leslie's hands.

To my utter astonishment, Leslie said that I was totally forgiven, and actually felt they needed my forgiveness for the reason that caused me to end our friendship in the first place. I was totally amazed and grateful for the forgiveness, but this was not the end of the story, as you will discover as you continue reading this book.

David and Bathsheba – Part I

King David, the man after God's own heart, committed what some people feel is one of the most heinous series of acts of betrayal in the Old Testament. As recorded in 2 Samuel, chapter 11, David decided that he wanted to lie with Bathsheba, a woman that he saw bathing on a rooftop. When David found out she was married, he had her brought to the palace while her husband was away at battle. When Bathsheba got pregnant, he tried to have the husband come back to sleep with her, so that the husband wouldn't find out the child wasn't his. When her husband wouldn't return from battle, David decided to have him killed. Nathan, David's prophet, told him that what he did was wrong, and David fell on his knees to the Lord and said:

*Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight —
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.
Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
Psalm 51:1-9*

The day that all of the wrongs I had done were brought out into the light, I grabbed my Bible and would not let go. David's Psalm 51 became my "theme psalm", and I read it over and over for weeks. It encapsulated exactly how I felt; broken and humbled before the Lord. Not only was I humbled because of my remorse, but also because I had received forgiveness that I did not deserve. Last but not least, I learned that I had a whole lot to learn about forgiveness!

Accepting Responsibility

Adam and Eve – Part II

In the Garden of Eden, when God asked Adam,

Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

Genesis 3:11

Adam blamed Eve, and God Himself, by saying:

“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:12

Eve then blamed the serpent. She said:

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:13

Note that, unlike Adam and Eve who pointed fingers at someone else, David didn't say “God, why did You do this to me?” or “It's her fault. She shouldn't have tempted me!” David didn't blame anyone else for what happened. He accepted responsibility for what he had done.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

James 1:13-15

Humility

God loves the humble. If you have done something wrong, whether you are confronted about it by another person or convicted about it by the Holy Spirit, your prayers will only be heard if you humble yourself before God.

*The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

Psalms 34:18

*Surely He scorns the scornful,
But gives grace to the humble.*

Proverbs 3:34

*When pride comes, then comes shame;
But with the humble is wisdom.*

Proverbs 11:2

*The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,
And before honor is humility.*

Proverbs 15:33

*...Thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“I dwell in the high and holy place,
with him who has a contrite and humble spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”*

Isaiah 57:15

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke 18:10-14

*Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.
Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with
humility, for*

*“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”*

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that
He may exalt you in due time,*

1 Peter 5:5-6

Transparency

We can't hide from God. He knows everything about us, even when we do wrong. God wants us to be honest and confess our sins to Him.

Who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults.

Psalm 19:12

I acknowledged my sin to You,

And my iniquity I have not hidden.

I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”

And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Psalm 32:5

O God, You know my foolishness;

And my sins are not hidden from You.

Psalm 69:5

*If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.
But certainly God has heard me;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.
Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!*
Psalm 66:18-20

*He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*
Proverbs 28:13

*...For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and
hidden that will not be known.*
Matthew 10:26

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth
is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a
liar, and His word is not in us.*
1 John 1:8, 10

God's Mercy

David and Bathsheba – Part II

I know a lot of people who think that God is just waiting up in heaven to see who does something wrong so that He can zap them for it. I know, because I was one of them. Many people might be surprised to find that God's heart has always been forgiving. God was merciful and spared David from death, a punishment which he would have deserved under the Law.

And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

2 Samuel 12:13

As I read the scriptures again after the things that happened in my own life, I saw God with new eyes. I was amazed to learn that He is truly merciful, even to those who rebel against Him.

*But they and our fathers acted proudly,
hardened their necks,
And did not heed Your commandments.
They refused to obey, and they were not mindful
Of Your wonders that You did among them.
But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion
They appointed a leader to return to their bondage.
But You are God, ready to pardon,
Gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
Abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.*

Nehemiah 9:16-17

*I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy,
For You have considered my trouble;
You have known my soul in adversities,
Psalm 31:7*

*If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.
Psalm 130:3-4*

*Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
Isaiah 55:6-7*

*Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the
transgression of the remnant of His heritage?
He does not retain His anger forever,
because He delights in mercy.
Micah 7:18*

Some think that there are certain sins that are too terrible for God to forgive. There is only one, and it is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Matthew 12:32, Mark 3:28, Luke 12:10):

... Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.

Luke 12:10

God's Love

Some of us feel that God only loves people who are blameless. If that were true, God wouldn't love any person in this world, for *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). God loves us all, and He showed us that love by sending Jesus to die for us. If we believe in Jesus, God loves us just the same way He loves Him.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Jonah – Part I

One of the most interesting, relatable, and frankly human personalities from the Bible is Jonah. God told Jonah:

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

Jonah 1:2

Instead of going to Nineveh as he was told, Jonah hopped on a boat from the port at Joppa in order to flee to Tarshish, (which is the equivalent to the other end of the world in those days). On the way, there was a terrible storm, and he was thrown overboard by the sailors. Jonah was then swallowed by a big fish, and by God’s mercy the fish vomited him, and he eventually made it to Nineveh to preach the message he was given.

God was not pleased with the sinful behavior of the people of Nineveh, but he did not want to destroy them. The story of Jonah proves that God is merciful, and that *He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). After the Ninevites repented of their wickedness, God spared them from destruction.

Forgiving Everyone

Apart from speaking against the Holy Spirit, we must remember that God loves and forgives all sins and sinners through Jesus; even those we think are unforgiveable. It may be comforting to know that, the worse the sin that is committed and repented of, the more He forgives:

Then one of the Pharisees asked (Jesus) to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Luke 7:36-50

This beautiful story helps us remember that Jesus does not accuse us (that's the devil's job), and that He is always ready to forgive.

...Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John 8:1-12

Truth and Consequences

David and Bathsheba – Part III

David didn't get away scot-free for doing what he did just because he was beloved of God. Because God is both just and loving, David had to endure consequences for what he had done. As a good Father, God knows what is best. The truth is, we may have to endure consequences because of our sin, but if we have confessed and asked God for forgiveness, He has forgiven us.

*Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.
He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Psalm 103:3-4, 8-12

Chastening

The word chastening means “to inflict suffering upon for purposes of moral improvement.” Because He is a good Father, God always wants to teach us something, and He wants us to learn from our mistakes. The chastening of the Lord teaches us much, and helps bring us closer to Him.

You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.

Deuteronomy 8:5

*My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor detest His correction;
For whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son in whom he delights.*

Proverbs 3:11-12

*His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life;
Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.*

Psalms 30:5

*Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.
It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.*

Psalms 119:67, 71

*For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief,
Yet He will show compassion
According to the multitude of His mercies.*

Lamentations 3:31-32

Redemption

The Prodigal Son – Part I

For a long time, I was discouraged because I let God down, and I felt that there was no hope for me. However, after re-reading this passage about the son who went astray, I remembered that, as His child, I was still welcome in His kingdom:

Then (Jesus) said: “A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

(continued)

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”

Luke 15:11-32

Freedom

One of the most exciting and liberating aspects of being a believer is that whenever we confess our sins to God, they are gone forever.

*The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.*

Psalm 34:22

*"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the LORD,*

*"Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.*

Isaiah 1:18

*"...For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember
no more."*

Jeremiah 31:34

*He will again have compassion on us,
And will subdue our iniquities.*

*You will cast all our sins
Into the depths of the sea.*

Micah 7:19

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 3:19

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:36

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

The chorus of my song is:

*Thank you for forgiving me,
Thanks for listening when I pray,
Please set my feet on solid ground
Help me find a better way,
Please dry these tears of shame and guilt
And set this captive free,
Of all the things that you have done,
Thank you for forgiving me.*

Chapter 2

I have hurt someone.

I have hurt someone.

Unfortunately, many people I knew and cared about were adversely affected by my choices and actions with regards to Leslie, either directly or indirectly. They all had reason to feel betrayed, too.

If we have hurt someone, it is important that we remember the three Rs of asking for forgiveness from someone we've hurt: Restitution, Reconciliation, and Restoration.

Restitution

If we have transgressed against someone, we must make things right as best we can (Exodus 22:3-7, Leviticus 6:2-5). If we have stolen, we should return what we have stolen or pay the person the value. If we have lied, we should go back to the person and tell them the truth. If someone is telling us that we are hurting them, we should stop that behavior or seek help if we can't do it on our own. According to Proverbs 21:14, a *gift in secret pacifies anger*, and maybe there is a chance it can do something to repair hurt feelings as well.

In most cases, it is not enough for us to say that God has forgiven us. We have to try to repair any damage we have caused. If we don't, we will just be blazing a trail of destruction wherever we go. That is not good for our witness as followers of Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation

Because God “*has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus, and He has given us the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:18), it is imperative that we live in harmony with our brothers and sisters. If we have done something to hurt someone, sometimes a sincere apology is all that is needed in order to make peace with them:

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.*

Matthew 5:9

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Romans 12:18

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Romans 14:19

As the roots of my seed of unforgiveness toward Leslie took hold, I unintentionally hurt quite a few other people, and disappointed many more who looked up to me to provide Christian leadership as well. They all had reason to feel betrayed, and I didn't feel that I was worthy of their forgiveness, either.

Even to this day, some people have not forgiven me, and perhaps they never will. Some people judged me, others chose to pretend I didn't exist, while still others used it as an opportunity to spread my personal information and gossip about me.

The song that I wrote continued:

*Though others may have judged me
And seen all that I lack
Please give me strength to carry on
And never to look back.*

This psalm says it much better:

*To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in You;
Let me not be ashamed;
Let not my enemies triumph over me.
Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed;
Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.
Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they are from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.*

(continued)

*Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth,
such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.
For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.
Who is the man that fears the LORD?
Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.
He himself shall dwell in prosperity,
And his descendants shall inherit the earth.
The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him,
And He will show them His covenant.
My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.
Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me,
For I am desolate and afflicted.
The troubles of my heart have enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses!
Look on my affliction and my pain,
And forgive all my sins.
Consider my enemies, for they are many;
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
Keep my soul, and deliver me;
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.
Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.
Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all their troubles!*

Psalm 25

*Draw near to my soul, and redeem it;
Deliver me because of my enemies.*
Psalm 69:18

What If They Don't Forgive Me?

Making restitution and attempting to reconcile by apologizing does not guarantee that people will forgive us. However, if you have taken those two steps, you can hold your head up that you have done your part. I recommend that you allow God to work in their hearts, as you have allowed Him to work in yours.

People might not forgive us for what we have done, but it is important for us to forgive them for not forgiving us, and pray for them.

*My friends scorn me;
My eyes pour out tears to God.*
Job 16:20

*I have become a stranger to my brothers,
And an alien to my mother's children.*
Psalm 69:8

*In return for my love they are my accusers,
But I give myself to prayer.*
Psalm 109:4

*LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me.
Many are they who say of me,
“There is no help for him in God.” Selah
But You, O LORD, are a shield for me,
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
Psalm 3:1-3*

Restoration

I understand that as a consequence of what happened, there are some bridges that may never be mended. Thankfully, a precious few of my brothers and sisters in Christ have shown me His love and grace throughout all of it, treating me with dignity as though nothing ever happened. I will forever be grateful for them. Most importantly, I know that God has forgiven me, and that he will restore me in His own time. He can do the same for you.

*So I will restore to you the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
The crawling locust, the consuming locust,
And the chewing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.
You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
And My people shall never be put to shame.
Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel:
I am the LORD your God
And there is no other.
My people shall never be put to shame.
Joel 2:25-27*

David and Bathsheba – Part IV

Unfortunately, there was no way for David to make restitution or repair the damage he did after the incident with Bathsheba. Her husband was dead, and there was no way he could bring him back to life.

In the second half of Psalm 51, David showed how much he wanted to make things right with God again and feel restored by Him.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;
You do not delight in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart —
These, O God, You will not despise.*

Psalm 51:10-17

Although the things David did to Bathsheba and her husband were horrible, and many of the resulting consequences were disastrous, a few good things did come out of the whole ordeal, proving that God loves to restore His children:

1. David didn't leave Bathsheba out on the street. He loved her, married her, and treated her as well as any of his other wives.
2. Bathsheba went on to give David other children, one of whom became Israel's great king, Solomon.
3. One of King Solomon's descendants just happened to be Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus Christ. Miraculous!

Romans 8:28: At the time I first wrote this section, I was seriously contemplating asking forgiveness from the people I had hurt, but I was weighing the risks of making the situation bigger than it already was. I had been advised to leave well enough alone and let people forget about it. "If the opportunity presents itself, I will try to make amends", I reasoned, but at that moment, the time was not right.

As I was putting the finishing touches on this manuscript, a most amazing thing happened. Jodi, the person besides Leslie that was most hurt in the whole situation actually approached me and stated that they forgave me. The most incredible thing about it was that they said they wanted to be restored to God, and the only way they could do it was by forgiving me. Astounding!

Chapter 3

I Don't Want Forgiveness.

I Don't Want Forgiveness.

Remorse, Regret, or Repentance

Generally speaking, remorse means to feel sad because you did something wrong, regret means that you wish you hadn't done something, and repent means to be sorry for, and turn away from, wrongdoing.

As I mentioned in the end of Chapter 1, after Leslie confronted me with the truth, I was in a unique situation for a while. I had remorse because of what happened, and I regretted that people were hurt, but I was very confused about what I was feeling.

Leslie had openly forgiven me, and asked for my forgiveness, but I felt like I was back at square one. I had heard all of the apologies, dealt with all of the excuses, and was treated badly one too many times already. I didn't want to renew our friendship again, and I felt totally justified in that decision. Furthermore, because I was so sure about my choice, I wasn't sure that I wanted God's forgiveness either. I was willing to suffer the consequences, if that was what God decided, rather than do what He said I was supposed to do. In other words, I had not repented. God was offering forgiveness, but I was refusing it.

That period in my life was probably the darkest time I have ever experienced. Did God truly forgive me, even though I hadn't repented? At this time, I do not know for sure. Some theologians state that if we are saved, we are forgiven no matter what. Others say we must repent to be forgiven. I didn't know what I should do, and for a while, I didn't care.

Jesus – Part II

Jesus made it His business to seek out the outcast, heartbroken, and lost people and make sure that they were always welcome.

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to (Jesus) to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:1-10

Like the woman with the lost coin, who will keep sweeping the house until she finds it, Jesus will not forsake the one lost lamb in order to take care of the ninety-nine that are still by His side. He cares for each of us so much that he will never give up until we are safe at His side again.

Even for all of my stubbornness, I believe is that God was gently holding me in the palm of His hand and, through His mercy, grace, and love, showing me all of the reasons that I should turn my heart back to Him.

One morning, all of the pieces of the puzzle came together in my mind. It was like the veil was lifted from my eyes, and I saw light for the first time in a very long time. At that moment, I realized how mistaken I had truly been for giving up on God, how much He really loved me, and how much He had in store for me. I realized that, even though I had given up on Him, He had never given up on me.

I felt like Scrooge on Christmas Day. “I won’t let you down again, Lord. I won’t waste another minute,” I said to Him. I knew this was repentance. I knew that I was a new person.

What If I Haven’t Repented?

If you are at the point that you feel justified in not forgiving, or have not yet repented for something you have done, please be gentle with yourself, because God will be gentle with you. He promises in His Word that “*A bruised reed He will not break*” (Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 12:20). Whether it be reacting in anger to someone who has hurt you, breaking a promise to someone, or participating in activities that seem to bring you happiness, but you know down deep are not pleasing to God, He will not force you to obey Him, nor push you to do anything you are not ready to do.

I didn’t think I would ever get through my situation in one piece, and I was certain that I would go completely insane. Nevertheless, by God’s wonderful loving hand, I have attained victory. You may feel there is no hope for your situation, but I have faith that there will be victory for you as well. And I praise God for it.

Part II

Giving Forgiveness

Chapter 4

Someone Hurt Me!

Someone Hurt Me!

It is quite possible that you may have turned to this chapter first because you have been the victim of an incident that has caused you pain. Someone, or perhaps even a group of people, has done something to hurt you, and you may be having great difficulty forgiving them. Although you may deeply desire to keep reading at this point, if you have not read the Introduction of this book, I highly suggest that you go back and read it first and then return to this chapter when you have finished.

Of all of the chapters in this book, I knew beforehand that this would be the most challenging topic to address, and there are several reasons for this:

1. I know what it feels like to be hurt, and it is difficult to be totally objective and impartial when you have been injured.
2. There are so many facets, viewpoints, personalities, and variations to every situation, and to address each one individually with any measure of accuracy would be a Herculean undertaking.
3. Most everyone has been raised with a different view of how to react when we have been hurt by someone. The Biblical view on this topic differs greatly from what many of us have been taught, and it may be hard to swallow for many people.

Bearing all of this in mind, I will humbly share with you what I have learned from the Bible on how to work through the painful, and no doubt complicated, circumstance you are enduring. It may not be easy, but I encourage you to take your time and complete each activity or read each section carefully so that you can really absorb the information. It will then be easier for you to put to use and help you come to terms with, and resolve, your particular situation.

Activity #1 – The Angry Stranger - Answers

In the Introduction of this book, I described the scenario of a hostile person walking up to us and elbowing us in the stomach as we were just minding our own business in the mall. These were the questions:

1. How would you react?
2. Would you expect an apology?
3. What if they didn't give you an apology?
4. Would you shout at the person or retaliate physically?

Most of us would want an apology, or at least a slight resemblance of regret on their part. Many of us would be downright angry with this person, especially because they just kept on walking. Some of us might retaliate verbally or even go so far as to chase this person down and get back at them physically for what they had done.

What if I were to tell you that none of those reactions would be satisfactory in God's eyes? Jesus said:

But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Matthew 5:39

Whoa! Many of us have been told since forever that if someone hits you, hit back and hit hard. What some people call "turning the other cheek" is in my opinion, one of the most difficult things on earth to do. Nevertheless, it is easy to see how that kind of reaction can shock a malicious person so much that they would want to know where a person would get the supernatural ability to do something like that. Please remember that as a Believer,

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

Domestic Violence

I must warn people that feel Matthew 5:39 or the "turning the other cheek" verse is a justification for domestic violence. There is no place in the Bible that says that it is acceptable to tolerate abuse (either physical, verbal, or emotional) at the hands of someone you love.

Even if you are married, this situation cannot be allowed to continue. The situation will not improve on its own without direct intervention from a qualified professional. Whatever you do, if this is happening to you, it is imperative that you get help.



Even though we are to “turn the other cheek” towards an evil or hateful person, if we really think about it, the people we are struggling to forgive are not really evil. That is what happened to me.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I was simply being hurt by someone I thought should “know better”. They were Christian, and were a good person for the most part. However, I felt they didn’t really care about me, because if they did, they wouldn’t hurt me.

There are many ways we can be hurt by people. Perhaps you are struggling to forgive someone who you feel is jealous of you and hurting you in order to gain status or position. Maybe someone lied to you, cheated on you, stole from you, or accused you of doing something you didn’t do. A friend may have gossiped about your personal information to another person or betrayed your trust. Someone might have hurt or even killed someone you love.

Whatever your situation is, I sympathize with your pain. I am not encouraging you to stay in a situation where your health or life are in danger. I am also not recommending that you stay friends with a person that has little or no regard for your dignity or reputation. However, I ask that you please read on before you make a decision about how you will deal with the person who has hurt you.

Activity #2 – Confronting Your Offender – Questions

In this activity, after you write your answer on paper, leave enough room for a second answer later that will be addressed toward the end of the chapter, where rankings and rewards will be earned.

Even if your offender has passed away, I want you to picture this person healthy and sitting in front of you, face-to-face. Then, I would like for you to answer the following questions:

1. Would you be able to say something to him/her?
2. If not, why not?
3. If so, what would you say, or if you already have, what did you say?
4. Would you want to do something to them?
5. If not, why not?
6. If so, what would it be? Or if you already have, what have you done?

Keeping in mind that the only person we can change is ourselves, there are some things to keep in mind (in no particular order) so that you can base your reaction to their offense completely on teachings from the Bible.

Be Careful With Your Feelings

It is a fact that all of us have feelings. Even though the heart is an organ primarily designed for pumping blood to the rest of our bodies, it is said that the heart is where our feelings come from.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, if someone hurts us, we can react in many different ways. However, because our feelings are unpredictable and easily swayed, it is preferable and wiser for us to guide our hearts than to allow our hearts to guide us.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:
who can know it?*

Jeremiah 17:9

...guide your heart in the way.

Proverbs 23:19

*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,
But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*

Proverbs 28:26

In the Introduction of this book, we looked at the different ways we deal with pain, and a list of some of the things that can happen as a result of unforgiveness. Even though we might honestly be able to say “they started it”, we are responsible for how we respond to the situation. If we are not careful, we might cause irreparable damage to ourselves and others by our reactions.

Beware of Anger

Because we are all being totally honest with ourselves, we would probably admit that we might be more than just a little bit angry at the imaginary stranger who elbowed us in the middle of the shopping mall in Activity # 1.

I mean, let's face it. This person just came up out of nowhere, you were just minding your own business, and because of whatever their "problem" was, they just came up to you and elbowed you in the chest. To make things worse, they didn't even apologize. Not only that, they just kept on walking!! That is enough to make anyone furious, isn't it?

The offender that you listed as your offender in Activity #2 probably made you angry as well, possibly even more so. More than likely, it is a person that you are close with, know well, or is supposed to be in a position to help people, not hurt them.

In Chapter 1, I briefly mentioned the symptoms of unforgiveness in our society. As many of us learned in Health class, a symptom is not a disease. Many times, when we get hurt, our pain turns into anger, which can inhibit us from forgiving.

Jesus – Part III

Jesus got angry, but His anger was a righteous anger. He only got angry with things that made God angry. His anger arose from observing the injustices that were occurring, and resulted in putting a stop to them.

In three out of the four Gospels, Jesus was angry at the money changers and people who were buying and selling in the temple. (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46).

One Sabbath, there was a man in the synagogue who had a withered hand. Jesus' intention was to heal the man, but the Pharisees watched Jesus closely just so that they could accuse Him of doing work on the Sabbath. Jesus' then *"looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts."* (Mark 3:5)

Like Jesus, we can get upset when we see injustice or indifference happening around us, and that anger can compel us to make positive changes in the world around us. However, unlike Jesus, who is perfect, we must be careful with anger because it will make us more likely to sin and less likely to forgive each other. For us, it is easier for anger to be a weapon of destruction rather than a tool for building.

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Proverbs 16:32

*An angry man stirs up strife,
And a furious man abounds in transgression.*

Proverbs 29:22

*“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your
wrath,*

Ephesians 4:26

*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put
away from you, with all malice.*

Ephesians 4:31

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear,
slow to speak, slow to wrath.*

James 1:19

You have probably heard that being angry is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die. If we allow anger to fester and be destructive, the only person that is hurt by it is ourselves.

“For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

Acts 8:23

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 5:21-22

As difficult as it may be, God doesn’t want us to hate or be angry with or take vengeance against someone who has hurt us.

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19:18

*He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor,
But a man of understanding holds his peace.*

Proverbs 11:12

But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

1 John 2:11

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 3:15

Activity #3 - The Sin Game - Questions

Using only a few of the sins listed in the New Testament, we will now play a game. The only rules of this game are that you must examine yourself carefully and be completely honest. Nobody will see your answers unless you want them to.

Using the scale of “0” for “never”, and “10” for “a lot”, on the line after each of the items listed below, write in how often you commit any of the following sins, then add up your total at the bottom:

- being angry or having wrath

(Matt. 5:22, Col. 3:8, Gal. 5:20)

- lusting

(Matt.5:28)

- making oaths or swearing

(Matt. 5:33)

- doing good deeds to be seen by men

(Matt. 6:1-6)

- praying or fasting to be seen by men

(Matt.6:16-18)

- using vain repetitions in prayer
(Matt. 6:7) _____
- causing a young believer to sin
(Matt. 18:6, Mark 8:42) _____
- being ashamed of Jesus or His words
(Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26) _____
- judging others
(Matt. 7:1, Rom. 2:1, 14:10) _____
- not loving others as Jesus loves us
(John 13:34, Rom. 1:31) _____
- being sexually immoral
(Rom. 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:18, 1 Thess. 4:32, Gal. 5:19) _____
- coveting, envying, or jealousy
(Rom. 1:29, Heb. 13:5, Gal. 5:20-21, 26) _____
- being malicious
(Rom. 1:29, Col. 3:8) _____
- backbiting (*talking about someone behind their back*)
(Rom. 1:30) _____
- being violent
(Rom. 1:30) _____
- being prideful or boasting
(Rom. 1:30) _____
- being disobedient to parents
(Rom. 1:30) _____
- not being merciful
(Rom. 1:31) _____
- not “practicing what we preach”
(Rom. 2:21) _____
- being hypocritical
(Rom. 12:2) _____

- not blessing those who curse or persecute us

(Matt. 5:44, Rom. 12:14)

- being wise in our own opinion

(Rom. 12:16)

- showing contempt

(Rom. 14:10)

- causing divisions or contentions

(Rom. 16:17, 1 Cor. 1:10-13, 3:3, Gal. 5:20)

- offending others

(Rom. 16:17)

- flattering

(Rom 16:18)

- being rude

(1 Cor. 13:5)

- thinking evil of others

(1 Cor. 13:5)

- giving grudgingly

(2 Cor. 9:7)

- having selfish ambitions

(Gal. 5:20)

- blaspheming

(Col. 3:8)

- having filthy language

(Col. 3:8)

- lying or deceiving

(Rom. 1:29, Col. 3:9)

Total _____

Activity # 3 – The Sin Game - Answers

In the Introduction we discussed that there is a vast multitude of sins we could possibly commit, and in God's eyes, none of them have more or less weight than any other. If you scored anything above a "0" in this game, you must be careful not to "*throw the first stone*" (John 8:7) at someone for doing wrong, because none of us are perfect.

*"There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."
"Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit";
The poison of asps is under their lips";
"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness."
"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known."
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

Romans 3:10-18

Judge Not...

David and Bathsheba– Part V

For many years, I was so confused about why God would love David so much. I thought, "If God wants everyone to be righteous, and David committed all of these horrible sins (including the one with Bathsheba) and seemingly got away with them, why does He consider David the "man after His own heart?"

It is very easy for us to make a decision on who is right and who is wrong. As Bible-believing Christians, or even non-Christians who observe Christians, we think “they should know better”. However, we do not know what issues, struggles, and weaknesses the other person is dealing with, or the closeness or distance of their relationship with the Lord.

In not agreeing with God for treating David so well, I was judging, and therefore behaving like the brother who was unhappy that his brother who returned home after prodigal living was receiving preferential treatment by his father (Luke 15:25-30).

Jonah – Part II

It is interesting to that when people discuss the story of Jonah, what is most often described as the moral of his story is his disobedience to God. To me, the most intriguing thing about his story is not *that* he disobeyed God, but *why*. After the Ninevites repented and God spared their lives, Jonah was displeased with God and said:

...“Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”

Jonah 4:2-3

Jonah was not happy that God was merciful. In fact, Jonah was actually angry with God that He would want to save these “evildoers”, and even wanted to die! God said to Jonah:

...“Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?”

Jonah 4:11

Yes, the people of Nineveh were sinners, but God was merciful with them. However, like Jonah, many of us want to see others suffer or get punished because of what they have done. Because God is merciful, He wants us show mercy to others, even those who are doing wrong. I know it is not easy, but it is not our place to judge others or exact punishment for their sins against us.

*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the hearts.*

Proverbs 21:2

“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Matthew 7:3-5

Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Romans 2:1

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Romans 8:33-34

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:10

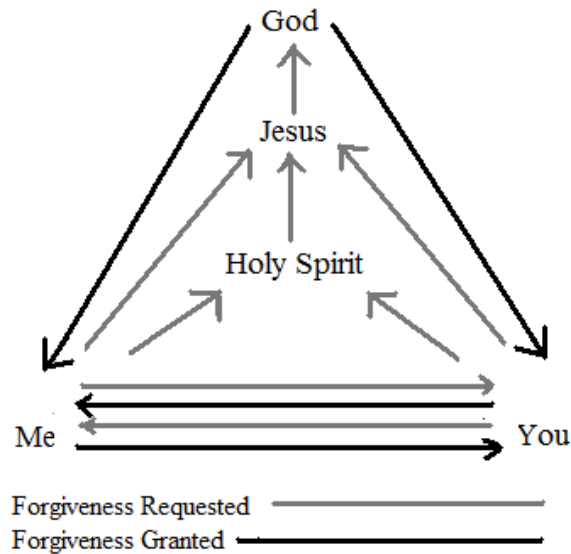
Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

James 4:11-12

The Forgiveness Triangle

The following illustration is a very simple explanation of how forgiveness works:

The Forgiveness Triangle



1. We ask God to forgive us in Jesus' name: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).
2. God forgives our sins because the blood of Jesus covers us.
3. Because of this, we **must** forgive each other.

Addressing Your Offender

It is very important, whenever possible, to tell your offender that they have hurt you. Maybe you feel that this person should know by your reaction (perhaps if you have been giving them dirty looks, the silent treatment, or even put gum on their seat), and you might not think you need to tell them. However, the godly (and mature) thing to do is let the person know that they have hurt you, and if they apologize, forgive them.

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

Luke 17:3-4

Why Forgive?

We have established that forgiving is the right thing to do, but why is it so important? As stated and restated numerous times throughout the Bible, because God has forgiven us, and we want him to continue to forgive us, we must forgive others.

*And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.*

Matthew 6:12

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11:25

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Luke 6:37

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

John 13:14

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Colossians 3:12-13

For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13

True Forgiveness

From the Cycle of Unforgiveness, we saw that it is a vicious cycle that can carry on forever, especially if we are waiting for an apology from someone who hurt us. The plain truth of the matter is, God wants us to be merciful and forgive our offenders, even if they don't ever repent or even ask for an apology.

*Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.*

Matthew 5:7

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:21-22

Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Luke 6:36

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:17-21

The Bible isn't very clear about the person mentioned in the following verse. Some scholars believe it refers to the man who was dating his father's wife, mentioned by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Whether or not this is true, it looks like the Corinthian church made this man feel totally ashamed and unwelcomed because of it. It is important for all of us, especially Christian brothers and sisters, not to be too harsh with each other.

But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:5-10

As many of us can attest, the moment we feel like we are most justified in our piety and self-righteousness, is the time we are most likely to be tempted.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Corinthians 10:12

We never know when we might be the one to fall into some kind of sin. None of us would like it if we made a mistake and were treated badly.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Matthew 7:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Galatians 6:1

Jesus – Part IV

Without question, the most wonderful event that has ever occurred in the history of the world is Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. One of the most awe-inspiring aspects of this spectacular happening is Jesus' reaction when he was being tried, beaten, and crucified. It is an almost certain fact that Jesus felt pain when the Roman soldiers were whipping Him, like all of us feel when someone does something to hurt us. With neither retaliation nor self-defense; Jesus' reaction was:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Luke 23:34

How incredibly beautiful it would be for us to follow Jesus' example to ask God's forgiveness of those who are hurting us instead of fighting back at them or holding a grudge. Praying for our offenders shows God's love to them in a way that nothing else could.

Loving others

At least seven times in the Bible it clearly states: “*Love your neighbor as yourself*”. (Leviticus 19:18 , Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Galatians 5:14, Romans 13:9, James 2:8). Even after reading all of this, you might wonder, “Who is my neighbor?” Is it a friend? Another Christian? Someone who is nice to me? This was Jesus’ answer.

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?”

And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Luke 10:30-37

More About Love

Did you know that the word “love” appears approximately 207 times, in the New Testament alone? This verse says it best:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:7-11

Like forgiveness, because God loves us, we should love one another.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:43-48

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35

Let all that you do be done with love.

1 Corinthians 16:14

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Colossians 3:14

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8

"If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

1 John 4:20-21

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. ...and now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

Showing love to others means doing good to, and for, them.

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of your hand to do so.*

Proverbs 3:27

*To do righteousness and justice
Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

Proverbs 21:3

*If you extend your soul to the hungry
And satisfy the afflicted soul,
Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,
And your darkness shall be as the noonday.*

Isaiah 58:10

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good
works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

*And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them
likewise.*

Luke 6:31

*But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in
return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the
Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.*

Luke 6:35

*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his
friends.*

John 15:13

*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want
to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have
praise from the same.*

Romans 13:3

Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

1Corinthians 10:24

... through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

Titus 3:1-2

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Hebrews 10:24

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2 NASB

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:6-7, 9-10

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-15

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Hebrews 13:16

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men —

1 Peter 2:15

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18

Jesus – Part V

Jesus wants us to treat everyone, even those who hurt us, like we would treat Him:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Matthew 25:31-46

Joseph – Part I

One of the most beautiful illustrations of forgiveness in the Bible, is the story of Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham, the patriarch of the Hebrew nation. As recorded in Genesis, chapters 37-45, this Joseph (not to be confused with the man who married Mary, Jesus' mother), was the favorite son of his father, Jacob. One of 12 brothers, Joseph was a dreamer who dreamt that his whole family would bow to him someday. Jacob also gave Joseph a “coat of many colors”, showing him preference over his ten older brothers.

All of this angered Jacob's other sons, and they became so jealous that they conspired to kill him. Instead of letting Joseph die in a dry well, they sold him to a caravan of merchants traveling to Egypt.

Joseph endured hardship after hardship because of his brothers' betrayal, all the while he stayed faithful to God. Many years later, Joseph became a rich and powerful man in Egypt, and his brothers came to ask him for food (not knowing he was their brother). Joseph had the opportunity (not to mention motive) to seek vengeance against his brothers, but he chose to forgive them instead. He told them:

I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Genesis 45:4-8

Note that Joseph didn't rub the incident in their faces, but instead told them to forgive themselves! When their father Jacob died, his brothers were afraid that Joseph would get back at them, but Joseph kept his promise to continue to forgive them:

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Genesis 50:19-21

Joseph saw that God had a purpose for his suffering – to save his family from death. By totally forgiving his brothers, repaying their evil deed with good, and speaking compassionately with them, even after what they had done to him, Joseph proved that he truly loved them.

Activity #2 – Confronting Your Offender - Answers

Using the answers you wrote down earlier, use the empty space on your paper to answer the questions again, using the information you gained in this chapter:

1. Would you be able to say something your offender(s)?
2. If not, why not?
3. If so, what would you say, or if you already have, what did you say?
4. Would you do something to them?
5. If not, why not?
6. If so, what would it be? Or if you already have, what have you done?

#1 - It is quite possible that for Part I of this activity, you may have answered “no” for question #1. If your “no” became a “yes”, for Part II, give yourself 20 points.

#2 - If you answered #2 with an answer like “Because I am angry”, but changed it to something like “I am not angry with them anymore”, give yourself 20 points.

#3 - If you answered #3 with something similar to “I would tell them off” or “I reacted in a way I am not too proud of” and changed it to “I will kindly let them know that what they did hurt me”, or “I will apologize for treating them badly and tell them I am in pain because of what they did.”, give yourself 20 points.

#4 & #5 – No point value

#6 - If you previously answered #6 with something like “I would beat them up”, or “I would kill them if I wouldn’t go to jail” or and changed it to either:

- Love them – Give yourself 50 points
- Pray for them – Give yourself 50 points
- Do good to them - Give yourself 50 points
- Forgive them – Give yourself 100 points

Score	Rank	Consequences/ Rewards
0-99	Apprentice	You still have much to learn. Please re-read Chapter 4.
100+	Master	Your training is now complete. You may proceed to the next chapter.

Chapter 5

I Can't Forgive Myself.

I Can't Forgive Myself.

Self-Punishment

From the very beginning, I felt constant guilt for what I had done, and even after I repented, I could not forgive myself. I would mentally torture myself with statements like, “You’re so stupid. You should have known better. Now look at the mess you made!”

As I did some research, I learned that many people find it easier to forgive others than to forgive themselves. People struggling with this issue feel the need to punish themselves if they have done something wrong, even if it was a mistake. The reasons for this might include:

- Low self-esteem or self-worth
- Past emotional, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse

If you were mistreated in your past, especially if you were overly punished or criticized when you made a mistake as a child, then you are probably unlikely to be forgiving of yourself if you do something wrong as an adult. However bad you might feel about this, do not let this become an excuse for not forgiving yourself. Never forget that God loves you.

*The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:
“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.*

Jeremiah 31:3

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Because you are part of the body of Christ, you are very special. For this reason, you should love and take care of yourself.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

Ephesians 5:29

Remember, if you have confessed to God, you are forgiven.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Is Not Forgiving Myself a Sin?

In Chapter 3 I said that since God has forgiven us, we must forgive others. By using Matthew, Chapter 8, I will now be so bold as to prove that since you have been forgiven by God, you must forgive yourself:

As you may recall from Chapter 1, Jesus was teaching in the temple when the scribes and Pharisees brought him a sinner. The people in the crowd had stones in their hands, ready to punish this person with death.

Imagine that you are the sinner standing in the middle of the crowd. You are scared that you are going to be stoned to death, but relieved when Jesus raises Himself and rebukes the people. Let's take your imagination even further and say that, not only are you the person about to be killed, you are also one of the people standing in the crowd ready to throw the stone. Would you throw it? It is very possible that, like the scribes and Pharisees, you would probably walk away and not throw the stone if it were someone else. However, if you said "yes" and chose to throw the stone at yourself, you are guilty of judging. Only God can judge!

...I do not even judge myself. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

1 Corinthians 4:3-4

Jesus' blood covers all of our sins. If we torture and condemn ourselves, then His sacrifice was in vain. In other words, it dishonors the blood of Jesus when we don't forgive ourselves.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1(emphasis added)

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the Bible clearly states “*Love your neighbor as yourself*” at least seven times. (Leviticus 19:18 , Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Galatians 5:14, Romans 13:9, James 2:8). If you are able to love and forgive your neighbor, then you must live and forgive yourself the same way. It is not good for us to love or forgive others more than we love or forgive ourselves. This may not be easy. For some of us, this is one of the hardest things in the world to do. I pray that God will heal any wounds you might have from your past that will keep you from loving and forgiving yourself.

...“I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you...

2 Kings 20:5

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name’s sake

Psalm 23:3

He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,

Your healing shall spring forth speedily,

And your righteousness shall go before you;

The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Isaiah 58:8

*Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved,
For You are my praise.*

Jeremiah 17:14

*For I will restore health to you
And heal you of your wounds,' says the LORD,
'Because they called you an outcast saying:
"This is Zion; no one seeks her."'*

Jeremiah 30:17

*Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal
to them the abundance of peace and truth.*

Jeremiah 33:6

*But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good
cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was
made well from that hour.*

Matthew 9:22

*...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we,
having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes
you were healed.*

1 Peter 2:24

Satan

Many people think that Satan is as powerful as God. This is definitely not true. Since the devil was created by God, so there is no way he could have be as powerful. However, God did bestow Satan some authority here on earth, so he can have some influence over us, if we allow him to. The devil wants nothing more than for us to give up, defeated in our sins, unable or unwilling to do God's work or fulfill His purpose in our lives. Satan is the:

...accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night...

Revelation 12:10

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

1 Peter 5:8

The devil...was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

John 8:44

Peter

Jesus knew that Peter, one of His most beloved disciples, would betray Him:

And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

Luke 22:31-32

When it did happen, Peter was devastated:

Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying."

And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth."

But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"

And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."

Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

Matthew 26:69-75

But Jesus restored Peter and directed him in His purpose:

...Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

John 21:15-17

Peter not only forgave himself, but he played a crucial role in securing the growth of the Church after Jesus' death and resurrection. If Peter was able to do all this after betraying Jesus Christ Himself, so we too must be able to forgive ourselves and move on. Remember, when we confess and come back to Jesus, we are no longer who we used to be.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Colossians 2:13

...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:14

For those of us who are quick to remember mistakes we have made and things we have done wrong, it is hard for us to let things go. However, if we are to move forward, we must learn to forget the past.

Do not remember the former things,

Nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I will do a new thing,

Now it shall spring forth;

Shall you not know it?

I will even make a road in the wilderness

And rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43:18-19

... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.

Philippians 3:13

Memories, feelings of guilt, and even negative words from others may come at us like waves on the beach that will try to knock us down. Jesus is trying to pull us out of the turbulent current of emotions to walk with Him on the sand, away from the waves. He wants us to be free.

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17

If you have done something wrong, it is normal to feel sad for a while. Quoting scripture and reading the Bible are very powerful tools to help you overcome feelings of guilt or painful memories. However, if you are feeling severely depressed, suicidal, or unable to cope with your situation, please get help from a pastor, Christian counselor, or a prayer partner whom you can trust to give you godly advice. God can give others the wisdom to show us what we might be unable to see for ourselves. Whatever you do, **don't give up**. There is always hope.

If you are still having difficulty forgiving yourself, I highly recommend the book “How to Forgive Ourselves – Totally” by R.T. Kendall.

If you are the friend or loved one of someone who is having difficulty forgiving themselves, I urge you to be gentle with them. Remember:

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Galatians 6:1

Remember the story of the little plant?

Away on the edge of the forest stood a little plant, only a few inches tall.

But the ground around it was so cold and hard that the plant could not grow. Instead it had feebly stood there for several years and had grown weaker.

“Grown and be beautiful!” said the forest, sternly, but the plant did not grow.

“Don’t you want to grow?” said the magpie; and then he began to tell the little thing how lazy and useless it was, but the words went in one ear and out the other.

Still the plant did not grow.

“I will teach you to obey!” roared the wind, and lashed the poor twig with its cold wings, so it came close to dying instead of springing up.

“You will surely grow, poor little thing,” said the sun kindly, and he poured warm spring rain from the sky and warmed up the earth around the plant.

And the little twig shot up and became a beautiful tree, with a leafy crown and fragrant blossoms.

Taken from “The Little Plant” by Albrekt Segerstedt
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Chapter 6

I'm Angry at God

I'm Angry at God

I've known both Christians and non-Christians who have been angry at God for things that have happened in their lives. It is understandable to me that a person might feel this way. I felt that way for a time, too. After all, God did create everything in this universe. Ultimately, it would seem like God is responsible for all of the hardship and pain we endure, because He had the power to stop it from happening in the first place.

Adam and Eve – Part III

As I mentioned in the introduction, it is not God's fault that we suffer in this life. Unfortunately, because of Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God, we live in a fallen world. Although they are to blame for bringing sin and death into the world, Jesus' blood brings life to all those who believe:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:22

We might say, "God, if you loved me, you wouldn't allow me to be hurt", or "If you control the universe, why did You allow this to happen to me?"

Whatever you're going through, please know that God allowed it to happen for a reason. I don't know why God has permitted this to happen, but I do know that everything that happens to us is because God has allowed it. Remember Romans 8:28?

All things work together for good for those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

If you really think about it, I am almost sure that even in what might have seemed like the darkest time in your life, something good came out of it. Perhaps you learned to rely more on God, realized you needed to change something in your life, or were able to help someone else going through a similar difficulty in their life:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Being angry with God will do little to change our situation, and it might just drive us further away from Him into sin and destruction.

for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:20

Four people of note in the Bible who either questioned, argued, or disagreed with God about situations they were facing were Moses, Job, Habakkuk, and Paul.

Moses

Many people might not be aware that Moses, the mighty man of God who led the Hebrew slaves out of slavery in Egypt and across the Red Sea into the Promised Land, was *very* reluctant to do so. Moses didn't think he was capable of doing what God wanted him to do, and 3 times he let God know it:

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Exodus 3:11

So He said, "I will certainly be with you.

Exodus 3:12

Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'"

Exodus 4:1

The Lord said to him:

"...It will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign.

Exodus 4:8

Then Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

Exodus 4:10

God sternly answered:

“Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

Exodus 4:11

After a few more back and forth exchanges between them, Moses finally agreed to do what God wanted him to do. Aren’t we all grateful that he did?

Job

Job was a very blessed man. He had 7 sons and 3 daughters. He was very rich, respected, and healthy. Satan asked God if he could allow Job to lose everything, just to see if he would curse God, and He agreed. As a result, Job lost all of his children, wealth, and health in a single day of tragedy. His so-called “friends” accused Job of wrongdoing, which would explain in their eyes, why he was suffering. Job asked God:

Have I sinned?

What have I done to You, O watcher of men?

Why have You set me as Your target,

So that I am a burden to myself?

Job 7:20

The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements?
Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*
Job 38:4-7

In awe of God's power and glory, Job then replied:

*I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.
I have uttered what I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*
Job 42:2-3

After Job confessed his submission to God's will, Job was blessed immensely for his faithfulness. If Job were alive today, I believe he would be amazed to know many people have been helped throughout the centuries by hearing how he refused to curse God after all he endured.

Habakkuk

During a very corrupt and difficult time in Israel's history, the prophet Habakkuk asked God:

*Why do You show me iniquity,
And cause me to see trouble?
For plundering and violence are before me;
There is strife, and contention arises.
Therefore the law is powerless,
And justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.*

Habakkuk 1:3-4

The Lord answered:

*Look among the nations and watch —
Be utterly astounded!
For I will work a work in your days
Which you would not believe, though it were told you.*

Habakkuk 1:5

Then Habakkuk humbly sang:

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls —
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The LORD God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.*

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Paul

Paul, possibly the greatest evangelist of Jesus Christ in the early Church, wrote to the Corinthians:

I was given a thorn in the flesh; a messenger of Satan, to buffet me so that I wouldn't be exalted above measure...

2 Corinthians 12:7

Paul told them that in his anguish,

I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

2 Corinthians 12:8

Instead of removing the thorn, the Lord responded:

My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9a

Understanding God's purpose for it, Paul wisely stated,

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9b-10

God's Ways

God has His reasons for doing things. To illustrate, imagine all of humanity like an infinitely large jigsaw puzzle, and each of us is like a microscopic piece of it. We can only see ourselves and the few pieces that surround us. God is putting the puzzle together, and He knows how our piece will make everything look the way it's supposed to.

Once we come to the realization that God's plans are so much bigger and more wonderful than our little minds can ever comprehend, it is quite difficult for us to get angry with Him.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9

The best way to have peace in your heart towards God is to forgive Him, and trust Him that, like a good father, He knows what is best for us. Whenever you are struggling with pain, disappointment, or any other adversity, give it to God. When you give your suffering to God, it gets nailed to Jesus' cross, and as a result you are :

...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

Sometimes it might seem like God doesn't care, but believe me, He really does. He loves you so much that He sent His Son for you. Please don't ever forget that.

I will also lovingly say to you that, whatever your circumstance, remember that life on this earth is only temporary. If we are believers, we are setting our hearts on heaven and the joy and comfort we will experience when we arrive there.

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:19-20

If you are still having difficulty forgiving God, I highly recommend the book “21 Reasons Bad Things Happen to Good People” by Dave Earley.

Part III

Happy Endings

Chapter 7

New Beginnings

*Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."
And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."*

Revelation 21:5

As I mentioned before, I hope to spare others the pain of what I have endured by sharing what I have learned throughout my ordeal. Had I had followed many of these Biblical precepts beforehand, I believe that many of my problems could have been avoided.

Whether you have either given or received forgiveness, there is something here that can help you to start fresh in a new life of promise or perhaps evade problems before they potentially begin. Although there are innumerable verses in the Bible that pertain to godly living, I have attempted to narrow them down in this chapter to the topics that relate in some way to forgiveness, spiritual health, or living in harmony with those around us.

Fear vs. Faith

The only fear we should have is fear of the Lord, but for many of us, this is infinitely easier said than done. I have allowed fear to keep me from doing many things in my life, and from fighting certain spiritual battles with confidence.

Fear of failure, success, pain, loneliness, rejection, and unfulfilled expectations are just some of the tactics the enemy will use to keep us paralyzed and immobilized. Remember, “*your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8) He will use whatever means he can to stop you from fulfilling God’s purpose for your life. Following God’s principles regarding fear will help us walk in victory. Many of the verses listed here kept me sane through the times when fear gripped me to the very core of my existence:

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

*Show Your marvelous lovingkindness
by Your right hand,
O You who save those who trust in You
From those who rise up against them.
Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,*

Psalm 17:7-8

*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.*

Psalm 18:2-3

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

Psalm 23:4

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 27:1

*Oh, how great is Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!*

Psalm 31:19

*I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.*

Psalm 34:4

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing,
But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.*

Proverbs 31:30

*Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'*
Isaiah 41:10

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

Matthew 6:25-32

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7

So we may boldly say:

The LORD is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?"

Hebrews 13:6

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18

Faith

The biblical definition of faith is “*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). In our Christian lives, faith in God and what Jesus did for us is the cornerstone of everything we do. If we didn’t believe these things, why would we even try to do what was right? Jesus illustrated what faith is in His parable about the rich man and Lazarus:

“There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

“Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’

“Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Luke 16:19-31

Although it is possible, we don't need to see someone risen from the dead or for great miracles to happen in our own lives to believe that God is at work, because *"we walk by faith, not by sight."* (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The power of faith is so great that no human being truly knows what is possible by wielding it.

..if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Matthew 17:20

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Mark 9:23

Because we have faith in God, we also want to do our best to serve Him. Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.* (Matthew 7:21). We must strive to be at the center of God's will in order to serve Him best, and do everything for His glory, not our own.

... But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:15

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:33

...not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

Romans 12:11

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

1 Corinthians 9:24

... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58

...and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

2 Corinthians 5:15

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

Colossians 3:16-17, 23

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:1

Holy Spirit

God is three in one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As His child, you have the Holy Spirit living in you. Jesus said:

“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 14:16

Furthermore, Paul said, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1 Corinthians 3:16). As believers who continue to live by faith, the Holy Spirit give us life and guide us into the center of God’s will.

“...When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

John 16:13

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

1 Corinthians 2:12

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Romans 8:11

Because you are a child of God and the Holy Spirit lives in you, when you speak, *“it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”* (Matthew 10:20). Moreover, with the authority He has given us, we can forgive others through the Holy Spirit in us:

...If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

John 20:21-23

Flesh vs. Spirit

Our human nature, or our “flesh” will always be at war with the Spirit of God that lives with in us.

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Galatians 5:16-17

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Galatians 6:8

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:19-23

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Romans 7:14-24

Sin – The Seeds of Satan

Adam and Eve – Part IV

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:1-6

Like Adam and Eve, we are susceptible to temptation on a daily basis. Whether the temptation might be to cheat on your taxes to get a bigger refund, lie to your boss about why you were late, or get back at someone who has hurt you by talking badly about them, Satan will do everything in his power to bring you down. The sad but simple truth is this; when we fall, Satan wins. That is why we must pray to be kept away from, and resist, sin in all its forms.

*Concerning the works of men,
By the word of Your lips,
I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.*

Psalm 17:4

*And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:13, Luke 11:4

*I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that
You should keep them from the evil one.*

John 17:15

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

*But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from
the evil one.*

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Jesus – Part VI

Jesus was tempted, just like we are today. He was “*in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him*” (Mark 1:13). Because of this, we can say with surety that “*we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

Sin and Death

Romans 6:32 says, *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* In some cases, sin can bring about our physical death, but this passage deals with primarily spiritual death. Spiritual death means distance from God. It does not mean that we lose our salvation, but since God cannot look upon sin, our transgressions create distance between us and Him.

If we want to remain faithful and in close fellowship with God, we must ask for His help to conquer sin. However, even though we can ask God for help, it is ultimately our choice to do good or evil.

*Whoever has no rule over his own spirit
Is like a city broken down, without walls.*

Proverbs 25:28

*Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have
committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For
why should you die, O house of Israel?*

Ezekiel 18:31

*Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to
life, and there are few who find it.*

Matthew 7:14

*When (Jesus) came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you
may not enter into temptation.”*

Luke 22:40

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:12-23

...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Romans 6:6

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 7:1

...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

Ephesians 4:22

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Ephesians 4:28

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Colossians 3:5

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

Ephesians 6:10-17

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4:7

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

1 Timothy 6:9

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:12

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

1 John 2:3-5

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

1 John 3:4-9

I have long been perplexed by 1 John 3:4-9. If we still sin after we're saved, how can we be born of God? One pastor explained this passage in a way that made sense to me:

Because we are human and live in a fallen world, it is almost impossible for us to not sin. Whether it be judging someone else, gossiping, lying, pride, or a myriad of others, it is inevitable that we will do something that is not pleasing to God every once in a while. As a child of God, however, we will not be able to sin *successfully*. The Holy Spirit living within us will convict us and convince us to repent, or we will be caught in our sin and chastened by God. When this happens, Jesus is our Advocate to God.

I write to you, little children,

Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

1 John 2:12

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

1 John 2:1-2

Warning!!!! We must be careful of thinking that just because we are saved, we may go about sinning as we please:

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Hebrews 10:26

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 6:1-2

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Romans 6:15

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh...

Galatians 5:13

Heart + Thoughts = Words + Actions

The words we say and actions we perform come from our minds and hearts first. Because “*the LORD weighs the hearts*”(Proverbs 21:2), God sees our motives from the thoughts and feelings we harbor inside of us.

Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor...

Zechariah 8:17

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:28

And (Jesus) said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Mark 7:21-23

Because our minds are where our words and actions come from, we should try to keep our minds on positive things.

*Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer*

Psalms 19:14

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Philippians 4:8

... for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

Philippians 4:11

Jesus is the “Word” of God, brought forth in written form for us in the form of the Bible. Stay in God’s word every day, and it will help you.

*Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.*

Psalms 119:11

*How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*

Psalms 119:103-105

*For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

Isaiah 55:10-11

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:32

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any
two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,
and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12

Words, Words, Words

Did you know that, according to 1 Peter 4:15, being a busybody or gossip ranks right up there with being a murderer, and in Revelation 12:5 it states that “*all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*”? Even though “*no man can tame the tongue; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*” (James 3:8), it is important that we be very careful with our words, because “*death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit*” (Proverbs 18:21).

*The truthful lip shall be established forever,
But a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

Proverbs 12:19

*Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression,
But a good word makes it glad.*

Proverbs 12:25

*He who guards his mouth preserves his life,
But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

Proverbs 13:3

*A soft answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Proverbs 15:1

*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,
But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.*

Proverbs 15:4

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth,
And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!*

.Proverbs 15:23

*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*

.Proverbs 15:28

*Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones*

Proverbs 16:24

*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue
Keeps his soul from troubles..***Proverbs 21:23**

*By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded,
And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.* **Proverbs 25:15**

*Do you see a man hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.* **Proverbs 29:20**

*Who is the man who desires life,
And loves many days, that he may see good?
Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.* **Psalm 34:12-13**

*The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,
But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;* **Ecclesiastes 10:12**

But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Matthew 5:37

...For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:34-37

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Philippians 2:14-15

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him... Christ is all and in all.

Colossians 3:8-11

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Colossians 4:6

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

James 1:26

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Not only is it important for us to be careful what we say to others for their sakes, it also grieves the Holy Spirit when we do not guard what we think, say, and do.

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Ephesians 4:29-31

Healthy Relationships

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we are commanded to choose our relationships wisely:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

Psalm 1:1

*The righteous should choose his friends carefully,
For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*

Proverbs 12:26

*He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*

Proverbs 13:20

*Make no friendship with an angry man,
And with a furious man do not go,
Lest you learn his ways
And set a snare for your soul.*

Proverbs 22:24-25

*Do not be deceived.
“Evil company corrupts good habits.”*

1 Corinthians 15:33

In order to be strengthened in our faith, it is crucial to fellowship with other believers.

*Ointment and perfume delight the heart,
And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.*

Proverbs 27:9

*As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

Proverbs 27:17

*Two are better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,
For he has no one to help him up.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Matthew 18:19-20

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:25

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

What Is My Purpose?

Did you know that God knew that you would be His child from the foundations of the Earth?

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 8:29

...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Ephesians 1:4

This is my prayer for you:

*May He grant you according to your heart's desire,
And fulfill all your purpose.*

Psalms 20:4

God helps us to live according to our gifts and purpose:

*O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself;
It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*

Jeremiah 10:23

For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

1 Corinthians 7:7

But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

1 Corinthians 7:17

... that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Ephesians 1:18

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

Ephesians 4:1-2

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

Integrity

Said to be “what a person does when no one is looking”, one of the personality traits that is most precious to God is integrity.

*The LORD shall judge the peoples;
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to my integrity within me.*

Psalm 7:8

*LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;*

Psalm 15:1-2

*Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.*

Psalm 25:21

*For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good thing will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.*

Psalm 84:11

*He who walks with integrity walks securely,
But he who perverts his ways will become known.*

Proverbs 10:9

*The integrity of the upright will guide them,
But the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.*

Proverbs 11:3

*The righteous man walks in his integrity;
His children are blessed after him.*

Proverbs 20:7

*He who follows righteousness and mercy
Finds life, righteousness, and honor.*

Proverbs 21:21

*A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
Loving favor rather than silver and gold.*

Proverbs 22:1

*Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich.*

Proverbs 28:6

*Whoever walks blamelessly will be saved,
But he who is perverse in his ways will suddenly fall.*

Proverbs 28:18

A good name is better than precious ointment...

Ecclesiastes 7:1

*He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?*
Micah 6:8

*A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into
the fire.*

Matthew 7:18- 19

*And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before
men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed
among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

Luke 16:15

*Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things
showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing
integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be
condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having
nothing evil to say of you... teaching us that, denying ungodliness
and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in
the present age.*

Titus 2:6-8, 12

Prayer

Prayer is how we talk to God. He will help us when we feel weak or vulnerable.

*I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah*
Psalm 3:5

*The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.*
Psalm 9:9

*Uphold my steps in Your paths,
That my footsteps may not slip.*
Psalm 17:5

*Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.*
Psalm 31:24

*This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles. Psalm 34:6*

*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;
For the LORD upholds him with His hand.*
Psalm 37:23-24

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps. Psalm 40:1-2*

*If I say, "My foot slips,"
Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up. Psalm 94:18*

*For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. Psalm 139:4*

*I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication Psalm 142:1*

*Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness. Psalm 143:1*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6*

*But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.*

Isaiah 40:31

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Mark 14:38

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it

1 Corinthians 10:13

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

Wisdom

Solomon, The Wise King

Besides Jesus, King Solomon is said to be the wisest person who ever lived. Here is an excerpt from his story:

... the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

1 Kings 3:5, 7-9, 11-14, 4:29-30, 34

Two of Solomon's most popular sayings regarding wisdom are:

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Proverbs 9:10

*Through wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
By knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.*

Proverbs 24:3-4

Many times in life, it feels like we don't know which direction to take, or like Solomon said, not knowing "how to go out or come in". At times like that, it is very appropriate to ask God to give us wisdom, just like Solomon did.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

James 3:13

Praying For Others

One of the best things we can do is pray for each other.

...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints —

Ephesians 6:18

Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.

Hebrews 13:18

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

James 5:16

Praising God

God is awesome! It is joy to praise and worship Him all the time.

He has put a new song in my mouth —

Praise to our God;

Many will see it and fear,

And will trust in the LORD.

Psalms 40:3

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.*

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. Psalm 100:4

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*

Psalm 139:14

Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the lute and harp!

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!

Praise Him with loud cymbals;

Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 150

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

God's Promises

God's promises are found throughout the Bible. As believers, we have the right, the privilege, and the duty to accept every one of them.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

2 Corinthians 1:20

As the Old Testament prophesied Jesus' first coming, and the New Testament promises His second coming:

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:32

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Titus 2:13

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21:4

Many of God's promises have to do with our protection:

*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.*

Psalm 18:2-3

*My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.*

Psalm 25:15

*For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.*

Psalm 27:5

*Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for
You are my strength.*

Psalm 31:4

*The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear
Him, and delivers them.*

Psalm 34:7

*Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me;
fight against those who fight against me.*

Psalm 35:1

*Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Defend me from those who rise up against me.*

Psalm 59:1

*Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,
Who sharpen their tongue like a sword,
And bend their bows to shoot their arrows—bitter words,*

Psalm 64:2-3

*A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right hand;
But it shall not come near you.
For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
In their hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*

Psalm 91:7, 11-12

*The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in
from this time forth, and even forevermore.*

Psalm 121:8

*Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*

Proverbs 30:5

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment you
shall condemn.*

*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their
righteousness is from Me,"*

Says the LORD.

Isaiah 54:17

*"They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts,
On the day that I make them My jewels.*

And I will spare them

As a man spares his own son who serves him."

Malachi 3:17

...If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31

*And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve
me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever.
Amen!*

2 Timothy 4:18

Inner Peace

These verses helped me learn that the best thing anyone can do through difficulty is be at peace.

*"The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace."*

Numbers 6:24-26

*I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.*

Psalms 4:8

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalms 46:10a

*In the multitude of my anxieties within me,
Your comforts delight my soul.*

Psalms 94:19

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity
in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does
from beginning to end.*

Ecclesiastes 3:11

*You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.*

Isaiah 26:3

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”

“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:25-31

By your patience possess your souls.

Luke 21:19

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:9

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

We were never promised in the Bible that our lives would be easy. Even as Christians (or sometimes because we are), problems and hard times will come....

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 5:3-4

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you

Matthew 5:10-12

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

1 Corinthians 16:13

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed —

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

2 Corinthians 4:17

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12, 2:3

But your future will be blessed!

*You shall increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.*

Psalm 71:21

*“For you shall go out with joy,
And be led out with peace;
The mountains and the hills
Shall break forth into singing before you,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

Isaiah 55:12

*Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.*

Isaiah 60:1

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the
LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future
and a hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11

This beautiful chapter in Isaiah is Jesus talking about the great gifts He will give to His people:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,
To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”
And they shall rebuild the old ruins,
They shall raise up the former desolations,
And they shall repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
And the sons of the foreigner
Shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.
But you shall be named the priests of the LORD,
They shall call you the servants of our God.
You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast.
Instead of your shame you shall have double honor,
And instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion.
Therefore in their land they shall possess double;
(Continued)*

*Everlasting joy shall be theirs.
For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery for burnt offering;
I will direct their work in truth,
And will make with them an everlasting covenant.
Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles,
And their offspring among the people.
All who see them shall acknowledge them,
That they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed.”
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God;
For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its bud,
As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth,
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before
all the nations.*

Isaiah 61

The variation of the chorus for the ending of my song is:

*Thank you for forgiving me,
Thanks for listening when I pray,
You've set my feet on solid ground,
Helped me find a better way,
You've dried these tears of shame and guilt,
And set this captive free,
Of all the things that you have done,
Thank you for forgiving me.*

Even though I wasn't sure that...

- God would forgive me for what I had done, I know that He has forgiven me.
- The person I had hurt would forgive me, I know that I am forgiven.
- I could forgive the person who hurt me, they know that they are forgiven.
- I could forgive myself for what happened, I have managed to do it.
- I thought I could never be a true Christian after what had happened, with Jesus as the focus of my life again, I know that it is possible.

*"With men this is impossible,
but with God all things are possible."*

Matthew 19:26

Conclusion

Who am I in Christ?

Remember who you are in Christ, the power you have through Him,
and some of the benefits you can claim as a believer:

Adoption/Inheritance

1. You are a child of God – 1 John 3:2
2. You are an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ – Romans 8:17
3. You are qualified to share in the inheritance of the Kingdom –
Colossians 1:12
4. You are born of the imperishable seed of God's Word – 1 Peter 1:23
5. You have been given all things that pertain to life – 2 Peter 1:3
6. You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing – Ephesians 1:3
7. You have all your needs met by God according to His riches in glory
in Christ Jesus – Philippians 4:19

Love/Peace

8. You are beloved of God – 1 John 4:10
9. You are loved with an everlasting love – Jeremiah 31:3
10. You are a saint and loved by God – Romans 1:7
11. You have peace with God – Romans 5:1
12. You are reconciled to God – 2 Corinthians 5:18
13. You are kept by God's power – 1 Peter 1:5

Santification/Glory

14. You are holy and without blame before Him – Ephesians 1:4
15. You are being kept strong and blameless to the end –
1 Corinthians 1:8

16. You are chosen by Him to be holy and blameless in Christ –
1 Thessalonians 1:4
17. You are justified from all things – Acts 13:39
18. You are the righteousness of God – 2 Corinthians 5:21
19. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit – 1 Corinthians 6:19
20. You are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit – Ephesians 1:13
21. You are a partaker of the divine nature – 2 Peter 1:4
22. You are in Christ Jesus by God's act – 1 Corinthians 1:30
23. You are brought near by the blood of Christ – Ephesians 2:13
24. You have been given fullness in Christ – Colossians 2:10

Healing/Deliverance

25. You are delivered from the power of darkness – Colossians 1:13
26. You are healed by the wounds of Jesus – 1 Peter 2:24
27. You are loved by Christ and freed from your sins – Revelation 1:5
28. You are forgiven all your sins – Ephesians 1:7
29. You are free from all condemnation – Romans 8:1
30. You can forget the past – Philippians 3:13
31. You are redeemed from the curse of the law – Galatians 3:13

Authority/Power

32. You are the head and not the tail – Deuteronomy 28:13
33. You are raised up with Christ and seated in heavenly realms –
Ephesians 2:6
34. You are a chosen royal priest – 1 Peter 2:9
35. You are an ambassador for Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:20
36. You shall do even greater works than Christ Jesus – John 14:12
37. You are a king and a priest to God – Revelation 1:6
38. You can do all things through Christ – Philippians 4:13
39. You overcome the world – 1 John 5:4
40. You have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to bind and
the power to loose – Matthew 16:19

- 41. You will receive whatever you ask for in prayer – Matthew 21:22
- 42. You have authority over all the power of the enemy – Luke 10:19
- 43. You are the salt of the earth and light of the world – Matthew 5:13-14
- 44. You are more than a conqueror- Romans 8:37
- 45. You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets-
Ephesians 2:20

Life/Calling

- 46. You are crucified with Christ, nevertheless you live – Galatians 2:20
- 47. You are called of God by the grace given in Christ – 2 Timothy 1:9
- 48. You are dead to sin – Romans 6:2
- 49. You are alive to God – Romans 6:11
- 50. You have everlasting life – John 5:24

I know that whatever God does,

It shall be forever.

Nothing can be added to it,

And nothing taken from it.

God does it, that men should fear before Him.

Ecclesiastes 3:14

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*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will
worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to
worship Him.*

John 4:23