

Forgive Instantly & Live Free

The Cure for Anger and Stress



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Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the *King James Version*.

Other Scripture versions are notated as follows:

ASV American Standard Version

BBE Basic Bible in English

CEV Contemporary English Version

ESV English Standard Version

EMTV English Majority Text Version

GNB Good News Bible

GW God's Word

KJV King James Version

MSG Message Bible

YLT Young's Literal Translation

∞ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992
(Permanence of Paper)

**How to Change Your Life
by Learning to Forgive**

Cure anger – Don't manage it

Wipe out Stress – Don't live with it

Defeat addictions – Don't tolerate them

Grow your Faith – Don't settle for mediocrity

Find true Happiness – Don't waste your life

A practical guide to God's one-step cure
for the problems you have.

**Forgive Everybody
For Everything
Instantly**

To the Seekers.

To all those who have tried to manage their trials and troubles and are ready to seek God's one-step solution.

Deuteronomy 4:29 (CEV)

“In all of your troubles, you may finally decide that you want to seek only the LORD. And if you turn back to Him and simply obey Him, he will again be your God.”



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The Foundation

The scriptures give us God’s solution for finding happiness. The key is Matthew 5:8. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” The word “pure” is translated from the Greek word “*katharos*,” which means “to drain.” Two English words come from that Greek word. *Cathode* tubes in our old television sets were used to drain the electrical charge off the screen so the next set of electrons could display a new image. We also have *catheters* to drain body fluids after operations or sickness.

Jesus indicates we cannot be happy until we drain bitterness from our hearts. Jesus called offenses debts. Harboring those spiritual debts or hard feelings create destruction in our life. The only way to empty the heart of its past bitter disappointments is to forgive unconditionally. Waiting to get an apology puts a condition on your forgiveness that dooms you to misery.

Forgiving issues a pardon to set the offender free, but true forgiveness must also cancel the debt held inside in order to set the offended free. A pardon and a debt cancellation free both parties. It is important to verbally issue a cancellation by saying, “You don’t owe me anymore. I am not going to try to collect from you.” That drains the debt and sets you free.

The net result of forgiving is a true understanding of the nature of God. At the end of the verse, the Greek word translated “see” means to deeply inspect. We often say, “Oh, I see” when we want to let someone know we understand. Jesus is literally saying, “Happy are those who drain their heart of bitterness for they will have a deeper understanding of God.” Forgiving is the foundation of Christianity.



Introduction

Freedom from Anger and Stress

It was two o'clock in the afternoon on a pleasant summer day in Chicago. I was driving eastbound on North Avenue, a four-lane main artery coming in from the suburbs. I was on my way to a service at one of the downtown missions for the homeless. I do not know where the Camaro in front of me with his brake lights on had come from, but he kept slowing down and looking in his center rearview mirror at me. I changed lanes to the left and started to go around him. He sped up, changed lanes in front of me, and again put on his brakes. He was obviously trying to stop me intentionally.

I had not seen him before. I had no clue what I had done to set him off or what his problem was. I made several attempts to change lanes and go on about my travel, leaving him behind to stop wherever he wanted. None of my attempts succeeded. He was definitely out to stop me.

I can only imagine what had started it all. Not having been aware of him before the brake lights went on in front of me, I could only speculate the reason for the problem. Was my speed the issue—too fast, too slow? Perhaps I had switched lanes and cut him off? I tended to be a bit on the aggressive side of driving in those days, so it was very possible I had offended him. But now, he was offending me, and I was not going to let some crank stop me for a face-to-face argument in the street. I also had concerns for the safety of my family, who were with me. As the event wore on, the alarm was evident on the face of my wife.

In times past, when I was young, I drove older cars with over a hundred thousand miles on them. I was driving an old, used 1965 Cadillac Deville that I had bought for five hundred dollars. It had a sharp V-bumper in front and 472 horses under the hood.

Down near five miles per hour, bumper-to-bumper, I had had enough of this guy. My temper snapped. I stomped the gas pedal to the floor. All 472 horses reared on their hind legs and jumped to the starting gate. The front of my car came charging into his rear end with the force of a Sherman tank. That Cadillac put a perfect, concave V in the rear bumper of that Camaro. The impact pushed his car ahead so his rear end was clearly visible from my perspective.

He stopped to check the damage to his backside. I passed, but only for a short while until the next red light on North

Avenue pinned us both in traffic. I had stopped far back from the car in front of me so I had lots of room to move ahead. He stopped behind me and got out of his car. He ran after my car, which was now moving ahead into the empty space. When he was finally even with my door, he kicked it (big dent) and severely hurt his fist on my side window (that did not break). The traffic light turned green, and I was gone, leaving him to limp back to his car with blue paint on his shoe from my car door.

I never saw him again. Two angry men and only four lanes to share! Two fast fuses on underlying anger issues, and Chicago just wasn't big enough! What is sad about this story is that it is true. And even worse is the collateral damage to the emotions of my family. What was buried deep in me ready to explode when a trigger set it off? What had I missed in my conversion to Christianity?

The scriptures indicate the source of our problem is not the people or circumstances around us, but the origin of the conflicts we have actually comes from within ourselves. James was spot on when he wrote: "What is the cause of wars and fighting among you? Is it not in your desires which are at war in your bodies?" (James 4:1).

James certainly had me correctly targeted with his evaluation. From all outward appearances, I had a very well-managed life that was successful, but under the surface was a load of baggage from the past I was unaware I carried inside.

My past hurts and unresolved issues could surface any time and disrupt my world and relationships.

This is the story of an angry man and his transformation into a man of safety and peace. It is a journey of a spouse deserving to be kicked to the curb who becomes a person worth fighting to keep. The following chapters tell of a critical individual who was changed into an accepting person. They reveal the journey from judgmental to understanding, from negativism to loving, from bitterness to forgiveness, from perfectionist to humility, and from addictions to freedom. These words are about a person bent on changing others, who turns inward and becomes dedicated to improving only himself.

These next few chapters lay out for you, in practical terms, how the same life changes can be accomplished in your life as well. This is a plan based on one verse, the most important verse in the life of a Christian: “If you do not forgive others, then your Father in Heaven will not forgive your failures” (Matthew 6:15 GNB). Take this journey with me; let this verse so influence your life that you cannot escape its impact. It has the power to change the direction of your life. Catch the wave and let God transform you into a new person, one that people are looking forward to meeting, not running away from.

This one verse in the Bible sent the author on a search that began with introspection and ended with an “Abundant

Life.” These chapters are a compelling admonition to follow this simple directive from Jesus and take the path He leads us on to a changed life.

Too often, we are trained by our churches to be satisfied with a Christian lifestyle that leaves us content in managing the wilderness of this world rather than encouraging us to move to the Promised Land across the Jordan and into the abundant life, the place of rest and peace. If you have grown frustrated and tired of the management-style solutions of the human treadmill we Christians have been hoodwinked into accepting that keeps us in the desert of hard work and effort, then take a close look at the most important thing Jesus ever said that concerns you—forgive.

Follow His words: “Forgive us as we forgive others” (Matthew 6:12 GW). Do just that one thing. Then, hang on; you are going to the top of a spiritual mountain that will take your breath away. You will never be the same. You will never look back. Mastering this virtue will bring success to your Christian walk. This single command from Jesus revolutionized my life and will change your life for the better as well. It works for every person and every battle you have to fight. It is the single directive that has the power to heal and cure every hang-up and addiction known to mankind.

Addictions are often equated with the severe hang-ups of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes, but we have a long list of acceptable addictions that we would rather call habits or slight

character flaws. They are still addictions and enemies of our lives.

Anger is one of those destructive habits we use to try to solve our problems or gain an advantage over others. Some explode, while others just simmer or slow burn in a passive-aggressive mode and find it hard to even admit they are angry or have a problem. Anger management is an attempt to control with sheer willpower—the character defect of anger used by many at various levels of intensity.

Who among us has experienced frustration or anger or even directed it at those around us? Who has been the target of the anger of others at some time in our lives? We have all been touched by our own anger to some degree. Many have experienced it to the point of it affecting their lives, relationships, and destinies.

It is also very probable that stress has come into play in our hectic, busy lifestyles. Most of us have been in a stressful situation that could have been better dealt with had we possessed some stress management skills and insights. Stress management concepts catch our eye on television or magazine covers. Among the most popular books are those that headline typical titles similar to *57 Steps to Manage Anger* or *101 Ways to Beat Stress*.

But what if you could learn a cure for anger and stress rather than a management program? What if you could make them go away so you had no anger or stress to manage? A

cure is far better than a management program. What if you learned a cure existed that worked on every single personality flaw? What if you learned the real problem and found the real cure for life's stresses and angers? What would your life be like on the other side of that knowledge?

Are you ready to learn and explore fully this miracle cure? Are you prepared for the single word that holds the keys to the life you never knew was possible? The Bible is clear: the emotional magic potion is . . . FORGIVE. Knowing how to forgive correctly by covering both aspects of forgiveness is essential to releasing the power it has to heal the soul.

Forgiving others has become a lost Christian art. Forgiving others may be the most neglected sermon in the pulpit today. We concentrate on Bible knowledge, we major in being biblically correct, we have programs and concerts to keep us occupied, but we fail to see the real Jesus and how forgiving he was or that his expectation is for us to follow in that forgiving spirit. Not many know how to forgive or are even willing to forgive. Not many are even aware of the unforgiveness they practice. They are certainly not aware of the dysfunction and destruction these hard feelings bring to their lives.

One of the most memorable comments coming from a member of a divorce recovery group I have led expressed the very success of God's great plan of forgiving. The member wrote to me at the end of the thirteen-week class, "I came to divorce recovery thinking I might pick up a tidbit or two. I

had no idea my life would be totally changed and I would have a bright future by learning how to forgive.” I wrote him back, “Forgiveness is God’s plan, and His plans are always successful.”

In these next few chapters, we will learn what forgiveness really is and how to forgive properly so that it becomes a cure and not just a management tool. Forgiveness executed properly becomes life changing. It is not just a word in your vocabulary. You will explore, in-depth, five words to live by: “forgive everybody for everything instantly;” they will change every day of the rest of your life for the better. You will be able to leave the past, anger, and stress behind for good. You will be given the principle of God’s ownership of people—lost in the Garden of Eden—that will give you the ability to forgive instantly, as Jesus did on the cross when He said, “Father forgive them” (Luke 23:34).

You are about to embark on a journey through these pages that will start you on an entirely new path. If you learn and do the physical work it takes to forgive completely, you will not be the same person as you exit out the back cover. You have reached a fork in the road when you entered this book. It is not right or left, but up and down. If you get your heart to understand what Jesus gave us in this big task of being forgiving, you will be on a path upward to a new life more abundant and freer than you can imagine. If you miss these principles, you will continue down the ever-spiraling path of human disappointments.

Perspective

“Lazarus, come forth,’ cried Jesus in a loud voice” (John 11:43), and Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave after he had been dead four days. Lazarus came forth wrapped in grave clothes bound hand and foot. We too were buried in the grave clothes of sin and left for dead and come into new life with Jesus wearing the baggage of the past life, our grave clothes. We are called to walk in newness of life and to shed the past that keeps us bound (Romans 6:4). Getting out of the last life’s grave clothes is not a management project. Can you imagine washing those grave clothes, pressing them, and putting them back on? We must “loose them” and “be free” as Jesus commanded (John 11:44).

We cannot correct the events of the past that created the memories of hard feelings remaining in our hearts and minds. We are called to “lose the hard feelings that bind us.” Drop them to the ground and walk away from them. Forgiveness is the simplest way to free yourself from the burden of carrying forward hurts we have experienced in the past. That is the new life Jesus has for us. He calls it the abundant life. Unfortunately, he says few find it. Multitudes come to Jesus and follow Him, but only a few seek and find the abundant life (Matthew 7:14). It is the minority that discover how to really forgive and move into “the peace of God that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). Many of the followers of Jesus wander in

the wilderness short of the Promised Land and still wear the past grave cloths of former hurts and offenses that haunt them.

Personal Journey

I was an angry man. I did not know I was an angry man, but others did. I was critical and judgmental. I was a perfectionist. What else can I add? The list would be long.

I carried the baggage of my past life with me far into my Christian life. I was unaware of the load I carried in my heart. Others could see the anger and edge I had, but it was buried in me and invisible to my eyes. I covered it with excuses and fancy names. I was termed a perfectionist—a term I liked and wore with pride. I thought I was a step ahead of others by doing things better than others could do them. I was blind to my own faults. I was the very person Jesus spoke of when he asked for people to take the beam out of their own eye before attempting to remove a sliver from someone else's eye.

With the words of several people directed at me, I finally heard what they were saying. I needed to look at myself and to begin to search for internal causes. It was time to stop trying to change others. It was time to address my own personal issues. I had a long road of discovery ahead as I turned my focus inward for the first time.

The principles in the following chapters so changed me that I became a man my wife would fight to keep. She is now the witness to my testament that I am finally now forgiving

and nonjudgmental with no anger. She is a beneficiary of a man who escaped his own anger and critical nature. I will explain what I pursued in the Bible that wrought a miracle in me and totally reversed my life. The journey I made is available to you. Dig deep into these pages to find some answers to use on your own journey. You too can become the person worth knowing and keeping. You can become happy with yourself. You can know you are in His footsteps.



Chapter 7

The Two-Part Act of Forgiving

We have all heard the words, “I forgive you.” We have all said them at one time or another. With good intent, we gave those words to someone who asked to be forgiven or simply apologized. Sometimes we even said them when we did not mean them.

But did we really understand what we were doing when we forgave? If the process of forgiving is not well understood, the words become just noise that will not affect the relationship or your own heart. Without a clear understanding of how to forgive, nothing will change in your anger level, stress, or in your file cabinet of debts. If we don’t forgive with full understanding, we can remain locked in our own prison created by our own bitterness of lingering unresolved offenses.

Since Jesus is the master at forgiveness and the author of the command to forgive, it is wise for us to take His perspective. Let’s use His words and the illustrations He gave to

get a full understanding of forgiveness. If forgiveness is the central theme of Jesus's teaching, we should be able to find the "truth that sets us free." If we forgive correctly as He instructs, we will be free of the baggage from our past.

Jesus tagged forgiving as a release of a debt in the Lord's Prayer. "And forgive, release or cancel our debts, as we forgive, release or cancel the debts of those who owe us" (Matthew 6:12). Jesus made forgiving a relationship between a debtor and creditor. We hold an offender accountable by establishing that he owes us a debt. It might be an apology, a huge sum of money, our childhood, dignity, respect, or something else entirely different, but the offender owes us something back to pay for the offense they have committed.

There is a real debt. It is buried deep in the heart. That debt has roots, and like a weed, it lives and grows if not eradicated. So we need a real tangible way to release that debt. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes it as "a root of bitterness." We need a spiritual shovel to dig out a spiritual root.

Jesus gave an expanded illustration of the debt-debtor relationship in the gospel of Matthew chapter 18. Jesus tells of a wealthy man who had loaned a large sum of money to a businessman. The businessman had in turn loaned money out to other needy people. The wealthy man decided to call in his debtors to collect, but the businessman could not repay at that time and begged for more time. The wealthy man,

rather than granting more time, just forgave the debt. He cancelled the debt, effectively letting the businessman off the hook for repaying any of the borrowed money. What a generous act on the part of the wealthy man!

As the story continues, the businessman, now aware of his short cash reserves, decided to call in his loans. He asked all his debtors to repay their loans. However, when a poor man could not repay on time, the businessman had him put in jail for the unpaid debt. When the original wealthy man heard the businessman had jailed a poor man who could not pay on time, he had the businessman arrested and put in jail. He sent a message to the businessman, pointing out how much had been forgiven of him; therefore, he was required to forgive.

We stand in that same place with the businessman. God, the wealthy Creator, has forgiven us a mountain of debt, offenses, and sin. It was sufficient sin and debt to send me to Hell forever, but God forgave me and cancelled that debt. With so much forgiven, He expects me to forgive the little offenses people make towards me. He expects me to cancel the debt of others. Because I am forgiven, it is required that I be forgiving.

It is important to see offenses as a debt—a charge you hold against someone for a payment owed on an account. To truly forgive, you must cancel that debt and never try to collect it again. It is not just a simple phrase, “I forgive you.” It is also the cancelling of a debt owed. It is clearing the ledger and

tossing the ledger card out. It is wiping the hard drive of that debt forever. You can say words about forgiving, but if you don't go all the way to release the debt you hold, they are simply incomplete.

Jesus did two things for me. He put in my hand a full pardon issued on Heaven's stationery declaring my transgressions fully paid for by Jesus's shed blood. Then He turned to the books and wiped out my debt I owed to Him for my crimes. So we are instructed to follow that same format in our forgiving. We can say we forgive and issue a pardon to the offender, but we are not finished until we cancel the debt that we believe is owed us. Both acts are necessary for forgiveness to occur.

Heaven's Courtroom

As I arrive in the huge courtroom in the sky, I see a judge seated at the gigantic, heavenly judicial bench. With a thunderous deep, voice, the judge summons me to step forward. I approach timidly. I carry in my hand a pardon I received from Jesus that states my transgressions have already been paid for by His death on the cross. I am prepared to plead guilty as charged and with joy anticipate the opportunity to offer the pardon marking my offenses as paid in full. I know I will be free to enter heaven before the day is over on the merits of the pardon.

As I approach, the judge seems perplexed and is looking for something. He shuffles through papers. He gazes over the desktop of the whole judicial bench. He turns to either side, looking down on the floor and around. With a soft voice, he states, “I find no charges against this man. Case dismissed.” I keep my pardon in hand and leave the courtroom. I can frame the pardon, or better yet, hang it with a gold chain around my neck for all to see, for my debts and sins have been cancelled and wiped from the records.

David records in the Psalms that God is deleting our offenses from his records: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies *blot out* my transgressions” (Psalms 51:1). The apostle Paul carries the theme of the erased records forward in his letter to the Romans: “There is no condemnation (no charges) for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1 ESV).

So we must also clear the record against those who have offended us, just as God has cleared our record. We must destroy the files and ledgers we have used to record the debts we held for collection against others. The second most important step of giving a pardon or forgiving is blotting out the charges of the offender. Clear the record so we have nothing to collect. If there are no charges, there is no debt. It is gone and we are free of the lifelong occupation we had as debt collectors. If you have had experience with a debt collector,

you would most likely relay a negative impression of the individual; so it's no surprise you had fewer friends when you held that job.

The reason to forgive correctly is to make sure the “root of bitterness” within us is eradicated forever. If we just forgive the offender issuing a pardon without also cancelling the debt, we have only partially forgiven. We have issued a statement or intent to let a person go free for an offense, but the debt he owes is still on the books of our heart and mind. Complete forgiveness is both issuing a full pardon and marking the debt owed as fully paid by reason of a gift from the creditor.

We can erase the charges for the offense. The charges are no longer necessary to leave on the ledger since they are paid in full. We give a gift of payment to the offender when we clear their record. We are paying the debt for them. We pay it gladly because we are resigning as debt collectors, judges, bailiffs, wardens, masters of the universe, and gods.

The Empty Chair (The Nuts and Bolts of Forgiving)

The forgiving of debt is a personal experience. This is not something you want to share outside your own bedroom. You do not want the debtor there—this has nothing to do with them. This has everything to do with your relationship with God and following Him in forgiveness. This is an exercise that cleans your own heart. Your relationship with the debtor will change in the future just because you will be different.

You will treat them differently without even saying anything to them. Most of the time, the debtor does not even know about the debt you have held against them, so bringing it up or having them present would only add problems. Some debtors may have passed on and would not be able to attend. No matter. This is for you, not them.

Set an empty chair in the center of a room where you can be alone with God. Imagine each debtor in the chair in your mind. Use a full narrative as you speak to each debtor: “I forgive you. You don’t owe me anything anymore. I am not going to try to collect from you anymore. I release the debt I have held against you. You are free of the debt and so am I. Your debt to me is cancelled and forgiven.”

Speak forth; say it out loud so God and you can hear it. Romans 10:10 tells us, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” These words are going to set you free from the baggage and prison of the past that has haunted you. It is important that you hear these words come from your mouth. God certainly wants to hear them. It is not a thought; it is an action. It is not an attitude; it is a decision. Find a private place you can actually freely speak to God and yourself, and then say the words out loud.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that you perform this exercise. Just thinking about it will not work because this is an action event. If you expect to pass the test at the end, or walk into the Promised Land, you are going

to have to start being a doer and not just a hearer (James 1:25). Do the hard work of finding and identifying your baggage and bring it to the chair for complete forgiveness and release.

If you are too embarrassed to say it out loud in a room with just you, Jesus, and an imaginary debtor, then God will be too embarrassed to acknowledge you. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

Once we learn the debt concept, we can solve hard feelings ourselves. We do not need the debtor or offender to be present or part of the solution. We can forgive the debt. We can cancel it entirely and stop waiting for collection. We have the means through forgiveness to control our own destiny. We can affect our relationship with men and God by our own decision. We do not need the input of others to clean our lives of baggage. Acting on that decision finalizes and closes the books on those events in our lives forever. We no longer need to carry baggage forward. We do not have to wait for others. Other people cannot make us angry, stress us, or destroy our life. We are the only one that can do that and we are quite capable of doing so if we refuse to forgive. We are also capable of forgiving and setting ourselves free. It is a choice. It is our choice.

So many times, I have heard the phrase, “forgive and forget.” But forgiving is not the same as forgetting. Neither should they be used together. Forgetting has nothing to do

with the act of forgiveness. God has gifted you with a mind that, hopefully, never forgets. Your goal is not to forget but to forgive. You will want to remember. You want to recall all the things in your life that you can use as a learning experience. You will have a different attitude towards things you forgive, even though you remember them. Now, after forgiving, those memories will bring smiles instead of sorrow. Now you will rejoice for the lessons you learned through those hurts and events. Don't even try to forget. Why pay the price for education and then try to forget it? Use the past now for good by learning from the past rather than the past using you.

I thank God now for the things I have been through. If I had never had a problem, I would not have learned how God solves them. I could never be where I am now spiritually if I had not come through the fires of trials. I thank Him for the mountains and the valleys. What good are mountaintop experiences if there are no valleys? My deep valley experiences have made my mountains seem that much higher by their contrast.

I have been on the high plains of southern Peru in the Andes Mountains. When you stand on a plateau at eleven thousand feet and look at the mountaintops, they stand above the plain only a few thousand feet, but seeing the mountains from Peruvian coast towering twenty-two thousand feet is breath taking.

The same contrast is evident from the eight thousand foot elevation of our high plains New Mexico ranch offices.

We are flanked on the west by Sandia Mountain standing ten thousand feet above sea level. From the other side, the mountain is so much more majestic because Albuquerque is at five thousand feet, making the mountain seem several thousand feet higher from that viewpoint. My deep valley experiences have made my mountaintops seem more beautiful and rich. The mountains are so much more majestic when seen from low points as compared to high mesas. My valleys, trials, and failures cause me to so much more appreciate the mountaintops and recognize their value.

Perspective

I put together a catchphrase as I worked through the journey to become forgiving. At first, the four words “forgive everybody for everything” seemed to be a great summary of the Bible teachings on forgiveness. I put them on a blank business card and used them daily, if not hourly. Later, I added a fifth word, “instantly” that we will explore in depth later.

In the ministry of sharing my experience of forgiveness and the five-word catchphrase I learned to live by, one person picked up the information as knowledge and began to use the five words in their conversation with others and teaching it in a Sunday school class as a badge of how much they knew. It gave them something to sport as though they had superior knowledge, but they did not do the hard work of actually digging out their baggage and correctly forgiving. They are

hearsay witnesses to the power of forgiveness having seen or heard it from someone else but not having experienced it themselves.

As a consequence, their behavior still exhibited anger, control issues, and lack of patience. Even though they had the message, they did not have the heart change that true forgiveness brings. Knowing is not the same as doing. They were like the seed that fell on stony ground (Matthew 13:20). The truth does not root in them to make a change in the heart. It is hard to keep talking about something you have only heard about and have not experienced yourself. The message did not stay on their lips very long.

Doing the hard work of digging out the baggage and forgiving produces a change in your behavior. Anger no longer controls you. Efforts to control others are no longer predominant. The things that you say begin to take on a sweet savor compared to the unpleasant responses that used to emanate. What is generated out of your life is totally different. Becoming a forgiving person produces a change that does not require management.

So when you hear someone teach or make claims, but the evidence is not in their life to back it up, you know it is a hearsay witness. James calls them hearers and not doers (James 1:25). Hearsay testimonies are not allowed in the courtroom in America, but somehow Christians, for pride reasons, think they can speak about things they personally have not

accomplished in their own life and not be found out. I am sorry to report that no one really gets away with hiding what is on the inside. The inside eventually erupts and comes out when you least expect it.

A friend returned from a Christian conference on self-improvement and was excited about what he had learned. The conference had made him look at himself and begin to evaluate changes he needed to make in his own behavior and attitudes as a man of God. He was so excited; he began to share all he had learned. I encouraged him to do so. Sharing what he learned would help others and burn the lessons deeper into his heart, but, I reminded him, until he actually performed the principles in his life he was only a hearsay witness. A hearsay witness is simply reporting what you have heard. If you do not do the things scriptures tell us, but just pass them on to show what knowledge you have gained, your testimony will only be a report of what others have experienced.

Personal Journey

Once I had discovered the debt I felt my parents owed me, there was no getting around the fact that I needed to start forgiving them at the foundation and work up. Even though my father was not there, I imagined him sitting in the center of the room. It was emotional. I stood and paced. I spoke out loud, “Dad, you don’t owe me anymore. You do not owe me an apology. You don’t owe me my childhood

back. I forgive you. I am not going to try to collect the debt I felt you owed me. I cancel the debt. It's gone. The slate is clean. You are forgiven."

Next, I imagined my mother in the chair and said the same words. I intended to go right on down the list of all those who had offended me, but the first two were so monumental that the emotion overwhelmed me. They had been such a force of destruction for my life. During their marriage, they waged a bitter war between themselves. Somewhere in my youth, I assumed the responsibility for their happiness and the success of their marriage. There was never any peace, so I assumed the blame for the failure to resolve their differences. I needed to forgive them for the dysfunction in our home and putting me in the middle of it. As I released the debt during the forgiveness exercise, the freedom I felt was almost inexplicable. Such a peace came over me that flooded my soul with joy. I actually felt the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. I had finally accomplished one thing God had asked me to do. I had come to the altar of forgiveness.

As I gained my composure, I went on to forgive all those on my list of offenders. Dealing with the debt I felt they owed me now was easy. The debts now seemed so small and trivial. Forgiving became a way of life. Just breaking through the barrier of my parents allowed me to easily release all the other debts I could think of.

Over the next hour, as people came to mind, I would cancel any debt I held against them. In one hour, a miracle took place in my heart: it was healed of all the anger and bitterness, and my attitude changed. What began to come out of me was a sweet spring of water. The bitter comments and sourness of spirit were working their way to extinction.

We all make incidental comments in the spur of the moment without much forethought. However, now, with my heart focused on instant forgiveness, the words and phrases that began to come out of me on were now pleasant and positive compared to the negative and sharp words previously flowing from within. Jesus had predicted that very result; “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38 ESV).

Have you believed what Jesus said in Matthew 7:14 concerning the narrow gate being the entrance to the abundant life? Is it beginning to make sense that we have just one thing to do; a narrow door to enter that will lead to the life He has for us? Does it seem much easier to live the Christian life successfully if we can focus on one thing rather than the shotgun approach trying to do it “all”? Have you believed HIM sufficiently to make you act on His words and do the hard work of searching for your baggage and forgiving?

Study Guide Questions:

Why do you need to hear yourself audibly speak forth forgiveness?

Why do you think God wants to hear your voice audibly?

Do you forgive in your mind with a simple declaration, or do you take action and cancel the debt?

What does it mean to forgive?

What are you actually forgiving? The person who offended, the debt you have created, or both?

Are you a doer of the Word, or just a hearer?
