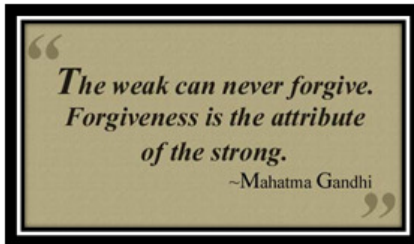




What if it's Not Your Fault?

Hebrews 8:12: (NASB) *For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more.*



We all know what it is like to be wronged, and we all know what it is like to do wrong to someone else. We also have all probably experienced being accused of or assumed to have done wrong when in fact we are entirely innocent - in that circumstance anyway! Is it right or just to ask for forgiveness when we are *not* in the wrong? What are the guidelines of this whole forgiveness thing anyway?

Can forgiving or not forgiving affect your health?

 **Health Benefits, *The Benefits of Forgiving*, Dr. Farrah Hughes**

- ...Looking at the cardiovascular functioning, also stress to the immune system functioning, cholesterol...believe it or not, forgiveness is directly linked to lower cholesterol levels! If you need convincing why you should forgive someone, here you go: You're going to live longer! People have studied blood pressure, heart rate, other indices... Cardiovascularly, there seems to be benefit to forgiveness.

To forgive is to make someone's sin against us lose its relevance in our life. We aren't always thinking about it.

Let's begin by establishing the mind set for forgiveness.

Forgiveness releases us from damaging emotions:

Proverbs 14:29: *He that is slow to anger is of great understanding; But he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*

Proverbs 25:23: *The north wind bringeth forth rain: So doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.*

Ecclesiastes 7:9: *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.*

Proverbs 19:11: *The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger; And it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*

 **Become more grateful, Fred Luskin, PhD, shiftinaction.com**

- We developed a forgiveness training based on four very simple trainable skills: First: Become more grateful. Practice that religiously, relentlessly. Open your heart all the time to what you have so that you recognize what the open heart is. That is a central practice of forgiveness because the opposite is what we do, which is: the world didn't give me enough, therefore I'm entitled to complain. You want to focus on the fact that the world did give you enough and there's nothing to complain about, to balance that out.

Gratefulness is a trainable skill.

Forgiveness is founded in a humble heart that is truly drawn to a godly perspective:



1 Thessalonians 5:14-18: (NASB) ¹⁴We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. ¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.



This is a way to apply gratefulness. It should be constantly in front of us like “refrigerator art!”

What about asking forgiveness when we did not do anything wrong? Does doing this fit in with godliness or is it just a way to avoid trouble?

Romans 12:9-19: (NASB) ⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;...¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Repentance as a legitimate issue:

 Will you forgive me, *How to Forgive, Corrie ten Boom (Christian holocaust survivor)*



- *It was some time ago that I was in Berlin, and there came a man to me that said Miss ten Boom, I am glad to see you. Don’t you know me? Suddenly I saw that man who was one of the most cruel overseer guards in the concentration camp. And he said I am now a Christian, I have found the Lord Jesus. I read the Bible and I know that there is forgiveness for all the sins of the whole world also for my sins. I have forgiveness for the cruelties I have done. But then I have asked God’s grace for an opportunity that I could to ask one of my very victims for forgiveness, and Frauline ten Boom, will you forgive me?*

How does repentance work?

 Manage the Stress, *Fred Luskin PhD, shiftinaction.com*

- *Second: It’s a stress management approach. You have to calm down your nervous system. You just have to do that, otherwise the stress chemicals will cause your thinking to become very limited and very narrow and very hostile. So if you don’t manage the stress of the unforgiveness, it’s very hard to get past it.*

What about the responsibilities of those needing forgiveness? Once there is repentance, is it a “free lunch” afterwards? If we repent of a wrong doing, is that the end of the story?

The concept of repentance is shown in three primary words in the New Testament:

Repent: Strongs #3338 *metamelomai*; to care afterwards, i.e. regret

Repent: Strongs #3340 *metanoeo* to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally, feel compunction)

(Compunction = uneasiness of mind due to feelings of remorse or guilt; twinge of conscience)



Repentance: Strongs #3341 metanoia compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of [another’s] decision)

Matthew 27:3: *Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself <3338>, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders...*

Let’s get a better sense of how repentance works:

Matthew 21:28-32: (NRSV) ²⁸What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, Son, go and work in the vineyard today. ²⁹He answered, I will not; but later he **changed his mind <3338>** and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, I go, sir; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not **change your minds <3338>** and believe him.

This word means just simply changing direction, doing something different. It is not a life-altering experience, nothing deep.

There can be forgiveness where there is no repentance, which we will review later.

Strongs #3338 ("Lighter" word)	Strongs #3340/3341 ("Deeper" word)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An emotional change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A change of choice (directional, not necessarily emotional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has reference to particulars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has reference to the entire life (much more transformative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signifies nothing but regret - even amounting to remorse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That reversal of moral purpose known as repentance <i>(The difference here can be characterized as emotional vs. actual change)</i>

Matthew 3:1-2: (KJV) ¹In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ²And saying, **Repent <3340>** ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

John the Baptist’s message was: **Make a heartfelt change in the way you live! Stop, turn and then progress.**

Acts 17:30-31: (NRSV) ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to **repent <3340>**, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Acts 5:31: *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give **repentance <3341>** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*



So should you ask for forgiveness if you did not do anything wrong? Is that being hypocritical? We will get to that more shortly, but sometimes our words or actions do not come across well. It is okay to ask for forgiveness for the pain and misunderstanding we might have unintentionally caused.

 I could not, *How to Forgive, Corrie ten Boom (Christian holocaust survivor)*

- ...and I could not. I remembered the suffering of my dying sister through him. But when I saw that I could not forgive, suddenly I knew I myself had no forgiveness! Did you know that Jesus has said that? When you do not forgive those who have sinned against you, my Heavenly Father will not forgive you your sins! I'm not ready for Jesus...because I have no forgiveness for my sins! But I was not able, I could not! I could only hate him!

The basic premise we will work with regarding forgiveness is the concept of sending something away. When you send something away, it still exists, though it is no longer relevant to your life. Therefore, to forgive is to make someone's sin (or perceived sin) against us lose its relevance in our life!

"I will remember their sin no more," ...does God really forget???

There are four key New Testament words regarding forgiveness:

Forgiveness: Strongs #859, freedom, pardon



Observation: This word is *never* used in connection with us forgiving one another - it is *only* used in relation to the pardon granted through Jesus' sacrifice.

Ephesians 1:7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the **forgiveness <859>** of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

We can't pardon - take away the sin itself - but we can make the sin irrelevant to our daily life.

 **Change the story you tell, Fred Luskin PhD, shiftnaction.com**

- *Third: ...Changing the story that you tell. How many people are attached to that story that paints them as helpless victims of something unpleasant? That story is probably the worst thing we do to ourselves, not the events that happened to us. A story of helplessness creates a helpless immune system, creates nervous system deregulation, and creates all sorts of patterns in the brain for thinking. That's what happens. When you change the story to something else, you give your body different pathways to function in and you give your mind different pathways to open to.*

Forgive: Strongs #863, to send forth, away



Observation: This word very broadly used - covers Godly and human forgiveness. It is this word that most clearly reflects our forgiveness of one another.

Matthew 18:21: (NRSV) Then Peter came and said to him, Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I **forgive<863>**? As many as seven times?

Jesus was telling Peter here in effect to just stop counting! Send the wrong away from you. Don't let it permeate and overtake your life.



 **Anger and forgiveness at the Gary Ridgeway serial killer sentencing**

- *Gary Ridgeway sat there stone-faced as victim's relatives damned him and mocked him. "He's an animal." "I wish for him to have a long, suffering, cruel death." "He's gonna go to hell and that's where he belongs." But then the emotionless façade finally cracked when the father of one of his victims appeared to surprise him with a dose of human kindness. "Mr. Ridgeway, um...there are people who that hate you. I'm not one of them. You have made it difficult to live up to what I believe, and that is what God says to do, and that's to forgive. You are forgiven, Sir."*

But he deserved punishment! But remember, the forgiveness does not release him from the punishment. But it released the father who was forgiving him from carrying the anger. He was trying to be godly in his approach.

Forgive: Strongs #630 to free, relieve, release, dismiss, let die, pardon, divorce



Observation: Broadly used but rarely translated "forgive."

Matthew 27:17: Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I **release <630>** unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Luke 6:37: Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: **forgive <630>**, and ye shall be **forgiven <630>**:

 **Forgive and be forgiven, How to Forgive, Corrie ten Boom (Christian holocaust survivor)**

- *And then I took one of these beautiful texts...Romans 5:5: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." And I said, thank you, Jesus...God's love through the Holy Spirit was given to me. Thank you, Father, that your love is stronger than my hatred and unforgiveness. That same moment I was free. And I could say, Brother, give me your hand. And I shook hands with him and it was as if I felt God's love streaming through my arms. You have never touched the ocean of God's love as when you forgive your enemies. Can you forgive? No. I can't either. But He can...*

Forgiving: Strongs #5483, favor



Observation: Broadly used in the sense of having a big heart, not taking away sin.

Philippians 1:29: For unto you it is **given <5483>** in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

Context of God's forgetting:

Jeremiah 31:31-34: (NASB) ³¹Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD... I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, **for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**

Does forgiveness imply releasing someone from consequence?

Regarding forgiveness, the basic premise we are working with is the definition of sending away - when you send something away, it still exists, though it is no longer relevant to your life. Therefore, to forgive is to make someone's sin against us lose its relevance in our life!



Did world owe you different, Fred Luskin PhD, shiftnaction.com

- *Fourth: We teach certain simple arguments on whether or not the world owes you anything different. Prove that there really was an error and you didn’t deserve what you got. Prove that.*
- *And so these simple skills are trainable, but I have to say I still don’t know actually how to teach forgiveness. I can teach these skills, and they tend to make people more available to forgiveness, but there is still something more ethereal or consciousness or spiritual or grace, or something that still has to fill that human space beyond just those skills, and I don’t fully know what that is.*

We can choose to live a forgiving and repentant life.

Did you ever notice how much of the Lord’s Prayer is about forgiveness?

Matthew 6:9-15: (NRSV) ⁹Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And **forgive <863>** us our debts, as we also have **forgiven <863>** our debtors. ¹³And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴For if you **forgive <863>** others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also **forgive <863>** you; ¹⁵but if you do not **forgive <863>** others, neither will your Father **forgive <863>** your trespasses.

Forgive us our debts: that which we owe - not money - but our sins and transgressions committed that take us out of balance with God. It is applied to us as we apply it to others.

When forgiven by God, do we undergo just an emotional change or an *actual* change? Have we actually changed direction? Being forgiven and forgiving ought not to be like a New Year’s Resolution. Peace is not merely emotional, it is truly transformative.

Introduction, **Renee Napier Story with Matthew West**



- *Over the past few years, I’ve been on this journey writing songs inspired by the real life stories people send to me. This one story in particular had a profound impact on me. It hit me kind of hard. It’s about a woman who did the impossible and made me ask myself if I could do the same.*
- *Renee had four kids. Two of her daughters were twins. One twin was coming home from the beach one night with her best friend when their car was struck by a drunk driver named Eric, a 24-year old kid. Meagan lost her life. Eric killed both girls that were in the car. Renee lost her daughter in an instant. Next thing she knows, she finds herself in a courtroom watching this young 24-year old man get sentenced to 22 years in prison.*

Ephesians 4:25-32: (NRSV) ²⁵So then, putting away falsehood, (like we are getting a raw deal and are always victims) let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; (we are not to act on the anger) do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. (Angry words do not give grace to others, forgiving words and repentant words are transformative) ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³²and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving <5483>** (favoring) one another, as God in Christ has **forgiven <5483>** (favored) you.



If we hold onto an unforgiving attitude it WILL affect us physically and emotionally, as our thinking and life will be continually shaped by its clear and powerful influence. Because we are affected physically and emotionally, we WILL be affected spiritually and that will directly detract from our ability to follow Christ.



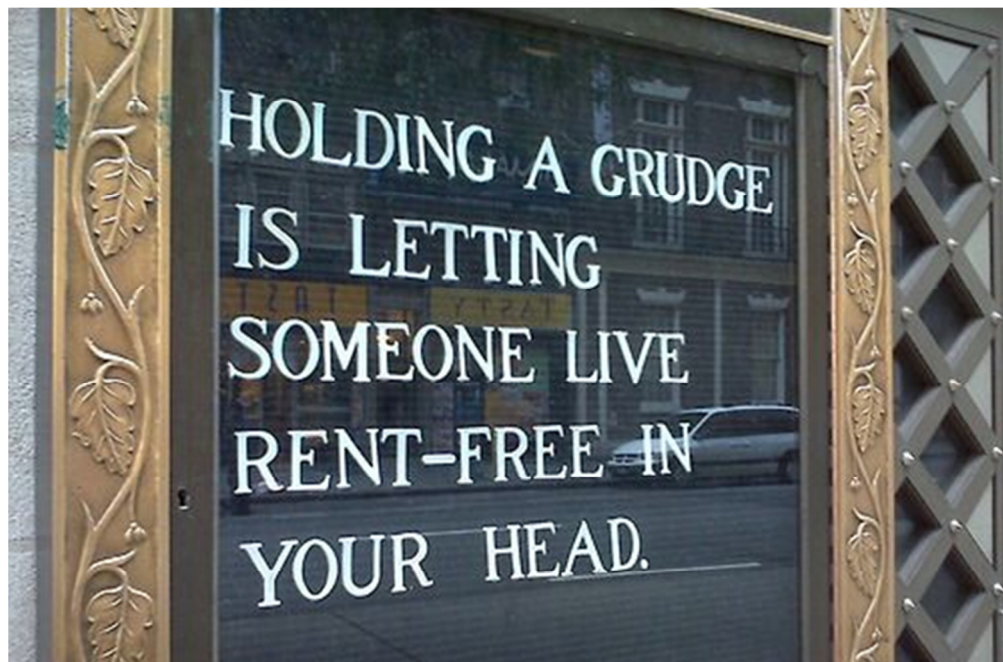
Philippians 1:21: (NASB) *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

Remember, to forgive is to make someone's sin against us lose its relevance in our life! The event still happened and the results of the event are still intact, but the relevance of the act against us has been diminished.

How does our forgiveness of one another compare to God's forgiveness?

 **Spewing past our mortality, Fred Luskin PhD, shiftinaction.com**

- I meet people who tell me 10, 15, 20, 30 years later that it still makes sense to them to say nasty things about other human beings. I'm truly astonished by that. I'm astonished by it in the sense that most of us fail to deeply embrace our mortality, so we think we have forever to spew this stuff out, that there is no accounting or this profound temporal power that no matter what has happened to us or when, we are done soon!*



God's forgiveness:

Hebrews 9:22: *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no **remission** <859>. (pardon)*

God can erase our sins. We can't do that - we can simply "send the sin away" from us.

How is it that God can remove our sins literally and pardon us? God, through Jesus, satisfied justice. A "life for a life" provided true forgiveness.



Luke 4:16-21: (NASB) ¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim **release <859>** (pardon) to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed...

The release here is not just an *opening* of the prison door...it is a full pardon - an opportunity to leave the prison - to go on and live without the previous consequences of sin. That is the forgiveness that God can give. It is complete and it is overwhelming. The secret to forgiving one another starts here! You have been forgiven for something great, so it should be easier for you to forgive others for something smaller.

 **Something missing, Renee Napier Story with Matthew West**

- *Renee wrote to me and said I now had a mission that I never would have chosen. What she meant by that was in the years that followed, she began traveling around to schools, churches and different functions speaking on the dangers of drunk driving. As the years progressed, she felt like something was missing from her presentation. And that's when God put it on her heart that she had not forgiven this man who took the life of her daughter. So, she reached out and did the impossible. She reached out to Eric in prison and said I forgive you.*

With our forgiveness to each other, is repentance required from someone who sins against us?

Well...yes and no! The Scriptures answer that question two different ways.

Here is a text that shows the part repentance *should* play:

Luke 17:3-4: (KJV) ³Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, **forgive <863>** him. ⁴And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt **forgive <863>** him.

So, I should never forgive unless there is repentance on the part of the person who sinned against me, right?

But here is a text that says love unconditionally:

Luke 6:27-31: (NRSV) ²⁷But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Hmmm...there is no thought of repentance here. We are to have a forgiving attitude regardless of what the other person is doing. So, what is the difference?



The first to apologize is the bravest.
The first to forgive is the strongest.
The first to forget is the happiest...



<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Luke 17:3-4</u> Repentance Required</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Luke 6:27-31</u> Repentance Not Required</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding “your brother,” who knows better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding “your enemies” - those of the world who don’t know any better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows persecution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically says to forgive and be humble 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Says to love, bless and be humble

We should hold those of the brotherhood to a higher standard than we do those of the world. It is for our good and their good to do that. We ought to communicate because they might not realize what they have done. Where communication is available, repentance is appropriate.

So again, the provocation to forgive can come from (first text) someone’s recognition for their need of forgiveness, namely a brother in Christ for they should know better, and (second text) regarding those still in the darkness of the world, from our own desire to lift up those who may have hurt us, for their own good.

What is the result of true forgiveness?

 Tell a few and become new, science and forgiveness, *Fred Luskin PhD, shiftinaction.com*

- *It turns out that people recover from difficulty better if they limit the number of people they complain to. What’s really effective research-wise is to choose 1, 2, 3, maybe 4 people who you share how difficult things are and keep your mouth shut to the rest of the world about that aspect of it. But get real support from those four people whose care and support is essential.*
- *So it turns out that people who tell a small number of trusted people, the research says they get through it. People who tell nobody and don’t have support, they have the hardest time, but right behind them are the people who are blabbing to everybody how tough it is!*

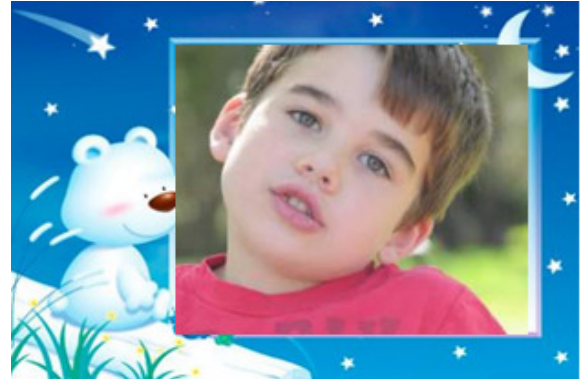
There is great wisdom in this advice! The more you talk about it, the bigger the problem becomes in your own mind, the worse the story becomes, and the harder it is to recover.

Finally, we all need to live with an attitude that allows forgiveness to pass TO us as well as pass THROUGH us! If we can apply the forgiveness of God through Jesus to us, then it gives us the power, wisdom and maturity to have it pass through us to those around us.



Be as a child, mom of Sandy Hook victim Noah Pozner, odysseynetworks.org

- *One of the evenings of the Shiva, I did light a candle for my son and for the shooter, Adam Lanza. It is something I did more for Noah than for myself, because he never held a grudge about anything. He would get into a fight with his sister but he would forgive very quickly. He would be right back to whatever they were doing before the argument. He liked to see the best in people. I just did it on his behalf. I don't think I'm there yet, but I was trying to be there and put myself in his place.*



An example of God’s forgiveness:

Psalms 103:8-13: (NASB) ⁸The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. ⁹He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. ¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear (revere) Him. ¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear (revere) Him.

Power of forgiveness, Renee Napier Story with Matthew West

- *The ripple effects of that act of forgiveness are still being felt today. That young man’s life has absolutely changed because this woman forgave him. He said I can’t even forgive myself and she forgave me. Eric said he found his eternal salvation as a result of this act.*
- *One by one all of Renee’s family members followed her lead and they reached out and expressed forgiveness to Eric, so much so that now they describe Eric as part of their family, like a son to Renee. The story doesn’t stop there, though. Renee went to court along with her family and she was able to have Eric’s sentence cut in half, from 22 years to 11 years. This blew me away. The reason she did it was so that Eric could have a second chance at life so he could join her in the presentations. She told me that now she shares not only about the dangers of drunk driving but about the power of forgiveness.*

Please see www.themeagannapierfoundation.com for more details about this important story.

Forgiveness, whichever end of it you are on, gives us the ability to “stir one another up.”

Forgiveness passing to us:

Hebrews 10:19-25: (NKJV) ¹⁹Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹and having a High Priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Passing through us) ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not 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.



"Forgiveness," Matthew West

It will clear the bitterness away
even set a prisoner free
there is no end to what its power can do
So let it go and be amazed
by what you see through eyes of grace
the prisoner that it really frees is you.
Forgiveness, forgiveness
forgiveness, Forgiveness
Show me how to love the unlovable
Show me how to reach the unreachable
Help me now to do the impossible
Forgiveness
Show me how to see what your mercy sees
Show me how to give what you gave to me
Forgiveness

This is God's perspective on forgiveness through Jesus:

Matthew 5:43-45: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Because you have been forgiven, you surely can be forgiving to those around you. Just let it go! Forgiveness is the kind of thing that will change your life. It is a hard lesson that we need to continually revisit because we are imperfect human beings. We may know it is the right thing to do, but we hold that anger and resentment. Apply the forgiveness you have been forgiven. What a massive gift! It will give you peace and peace is transformative.

**So what if it's not your fault...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**





First, more on Matthew West, the Renee Napier story and his song:

<http://matthewwest.com/the-stories/the-story-forgiveness/>

"Forgiveness" by Matthew West

It's the hardest thing to give away
And the last thing on your mind today
It always goes to those who don't deserve
It's the opposite of how you feel
When the pain they caused is just too real
Takes everything you have to say the word
Forgiveness

It's always anger's own worst enemy
Even when the jury and the judge
Say you've got a right to hold a grudge
It's the whisper in your ear saying, "set it free"
Forgiveness

Lord, show me how to love the unlovable
Teach me how to reach the unreachable
Help me now to do the impossible
Forgiveness

It can clear the bitterness away
It can even set a prisoner free
There is no end to what its power can do
So, let it go and be amazed
By what you see through eyes of Grace
The prisoner that it really frees is you
Forgiveness

Physiologic effects of forgiveness: (References supplied by a CQ Researcher who is a doctor of physical therapy)

http://www.chce.research.va.gov/docs/pdfs/pi_publications/Harris/2005_Harris_Thorsen_HF.pdf

There is indirect evidence that forgiveness and "unforgiveness" have a physiologic effect on the human body. The authors make the assumption that unforgiveness has the same effect as chronic stress. Page 323 of the article briefly talks about the physiologic effects of stress, particularly hyperarousal of the sympathetic nervous system. Article coronary artery disease, and atherosclerosis of the carotid arteries mentioned later. Chronic stress to the body is referred to as "allostatic load" and Wikipedia has a nice summary of the actual physiologic effects on the body.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allostatic_load

Page 326 then defines forgiveness as a "reduction of unforgiveness plus an increase of positive states, such as empathy, compassion, or hope."

Then they discuss the physiologic mechanisms that a positive affect has on health: improved immune system, specifically speeds cardiovascular recovery caused by stress, increased antibodies, and improved blood pressure. There are many gaps in the research but there is some evidence linking a positive affect and mortality.



Page 328 briefly summarizes a very interesting randomized controlled trial of a 10 week forgiveness program in males with coronary artery disease. They found that from pretest to follow-up, "significant differences in reductions of anger-induced myocardial perfusion defects were found in favor of the forgiveness condition." I'm not sure what exactly they did in the forgiveness program, but nevertheless very interesting I think.

Effects on blood pressure: http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/eli-finkel/documents/InPress_HannonFinkelKumashiroRusbult_PersonalRelationships.pdf

Hostility linked to coronary heart disease:
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/614337050/fulltextPDF?accountid=14552#>

Here are two GREAT scriptural examples of living forgiven!

Once we can pass through the open door of repentance we will develop a willingness to right the wrongs we have done:



Luke 19:1-10: (NRSV) ¹He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today. ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner. ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much. ⁹Then Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.

This experience illustrates how our heart can sometimes be overrun by our experiences and we can forget what is most important - until our eyes are opened to repentance and forgiveness,

Live a forgiven life of changed direction:

Acts 9:1-6: (NKJV) ¹Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Here is a man who believed that evil was good!

³As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? ⁵And he said, Who are you, Lord? Then the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

Saul was confronted with truth - this created a cross road of choice - do I follow my previously focused path or do I face the humiliation of its sin and go exactly the opposite direction?

⁶So he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? Then the Lord said to him, Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.

It is no accident that Saul was blinded - for that blindness not only revealed the pathway of sin; it also revealed the open door of repentance...