

## **The Forgiveness Factor**

Dear Friend,

“His voice cracking on the witness stand, Brandt Jean turned to the judge and asked to hug the woman who had killed his brother.”

Darron Simeon reported the following on CNN. “The jury had just sentenced former Dallas police officer, Amber Guyer to 10 years in prison. ‘I don’t know if this is possible but can I give her a hug, please, ‘he asked please?’ ‘Yes’ District Judge Tammy Kemp said. Jean stepped down from the witness stand and hugged Guyer tightly on Wednesday.’ He said ‘I don’t want to say it twice or for the hundredth time, what you’ve or how much you’ve taken from us. I think you know that, he said. But if you truly are sorry-I know I can speak for myself-I forgive you,’ he told Guyer. ‘And I know if you go to God and ask Him. He will forgive you,’ He said. ‘I love you just like anyone else,’ he said. ‘I’m not going to say I hope you rot and die, just like my brother did...I personally want the best for you’.”

By exercising the forgiveness factor Brandt Jean’s testimony of love was broadcast around the world. It was a healing moment as the forgiveness factor was exercised in Dallas, Texas.

As Brandt Jean hugged Amber Guyer even the judge had tears in her eyes.

Nadine Collier also brought healing when she reached in faith and exercised the forgiveness factor.

Nadine’s words, “You took something very precious away from me, but I forgive you,” were words of reconciliation that were heard around the world. Twenty one year old white supremacist Dylann Roof had earlier come to a Bible study at Nadine’s church, and then killed her mother and eight others who were in attendance.

In the days following Nadine’s expression of forgiveness continued to be expressed by family members who had seen their loved ones gunned down that tragic night at Emmanuel African Methodist Church, in Charleston, South Carolina.

The first to be shot was the Pastor, Clementa Pinckney. Not only was he a great civil rights leader and a state senator, but he had also been a great minister who had taught the members of his congregation how to forgive.

The *Washington Times*, like so many members of the media pointed out, that if there's one positive to be found in this tragedy, it is Charleston's response. The city did not "erupt into riot and violence" after the shooting. Instead, tens of thousands of residents, black and white, came together and joined hands on a unity march.

The only way Nadine Collier and the other heroes of faith could stand steadfast in the midst of this tragedy, was because they had learned to apply the forgiveness factor.

Getting rid of un-forgiveness means completely letting go of the hurts that the other person has done to you. It also includes letting go of the hold this event that has impacted your life has had upon you.

Forgiving does not mean forgetting what has been done to you. Instead, it means filtering the hurt through the love of God. Under Jesus direction, and by His love, action can then be taken to put the forgiveness factor to work.

To forgive is to live. Forgiving means letting go of the plague of unforgiveness which has resulted from the hurt people have done to you. This letting go involves granting forgiveness in exchange for emotional health and happiness. When you let the healing of forgiveness take place in your life, you will also find the weight of anger lifted from you.

Like waves lapping at a shore, generations of abuse tend to follow one another. Each generation trapping the next in the emotional bondage of bitterness, anger and unforgiveness. As a result, untold thousands who have let unforgiveness plague their lives, walk around angry at their parents or someone else who has mistreated them in their past. Their lives are confused, their emotions crushed, and their ability to help others who are in need, destroyed.

As we read the scriptures, we are introduced to people like Joseph (Genesis, chapters 37-50). Joseph had received terrible mistreatment, yet he refused to accept the role of being a victim of unforgiveness and bitterness. After being thrown in a well by his brothers and sold into slavery, he was falsely accused by his master's wife and ended up in prison. Even after all of this, Joseph still refused to resume the role of a victim locked in the emotional prison of hatred and hopelessness.

When Joseph became a leader in the land of Egypt with power to destroy the brothers who mistreated him, Joseph showed he had not let un-forgiveness plague his life when he said in Genesis 50:20-21, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”

Genesis 39:2 says, “***The Lord was with Joseph.***” The fact is, the Lord is also with you. Now you can have the same security and emotional healing that Joseph had when he went through his trials. What is needed is the implementation of the forgiveness factor that Jesus Christ made possible through His death and resurrection.

It is Christ’s forgiveness which is extended to each of us that makes it possible for us to forgive those who have mistreated us. As a result, the forgiveness Jesus provides releases us from the plague of bitterness that locks us into being victims of that past, and frees us to receive the promise of the future. As we choose to release the past and forgive, we in turn allow God to regain control of our lives and heal our emotions.

It is the certainty of this forgiveness which Christ provides that gives us the motivation to forgive others. Paul put it this way, “***Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you***” (Ephesians 4:32).

The Bible tells us that God’s forgiveness of our sins compels us to forgive those who sin against us. Jesus expressed this fact in the Lord’s Prayer when He prays, “***Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us***” (Matthew 6:12).

As we choose to exercise the forgiveness factor, we are freed from being victims of the past, and become victors of the present. As we forgive those who have hurt us, we discover, because of Christ’s forgiveness and His justification, our emotional well-being is not dependent on the response of the offender. We are freed to move as victims of the past to be victors in the present who are agents of love. This frees us from the tyranny of self, and enables us to be creative forces of good in a hurting world.

It's much easier to forgive our offender when we see that in many cases, they too are broken people who are victims of their past. Jesus, recognizing this, was able to declare from the cross, "***Father forgive them for they know not what they do***" **Luke 23:34.**

To forgive may also involve confronting the offender on a one-to-one basis. Prior to doing this, we must pray and meditate on Philippians 4:8, "***Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.***"

Remember that you are encountering the offender to forgive and restore a relationship, not to seek revenge. As indicated earlier, because you have been justified by Christ, your emotional well-being is not dependent on their response. This means you are free to forgive and give the love of Christ.

Many choose to bury their anger, fearing that it will become a raging fire, burning out of control. Yet anger has to go somewhere. As a result, it may seep out into one's daily environment like illegally dumped toxic waste, revealing itself as depression, substance abuse, promiscuity, or dreams of wild revenge.

Without genuine love and forgiveness, a home will be torn apart; a friendship destroyed; a church and its ministry rendered unproductive and ineffective.

The time has come to stop denying the hurt and then, once acknowledging it, stop blaming others for it. Start all over and let the love of Jesus Christ heal you now. Every rip in the fabric of a relationship needs the binding of God's love. Such a binding involves making the "quantum leap" where, like an electron aimlessly circling the nucleus of resentment, we receive a new burst of energy which thrusts us around the nucleus of God's love. This spiritual quantum law resulting in the forgiveness factor, is summed up in Galatians 5:14-15 which says, "***The entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.***"

Revolving around the nucleus of bitterness causes destruction. Receiving the energy of Christ's love, and the forgiveness provided by His death and resurrection, results in life and liberty from the tyranny of the mistreatment of the past.

As long as you continue to hold on to your bitterness, you will continue to be a victim. Yes, you were deeply hurt in the past, but the fact is you cannot change the past. What you can change is your perception of it and the feelings, which enslave you in the present. That is why you need to start all over and respond in a positive way to the invitation that Jesus gives in Matthew 11:28 when He says, ***“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”***

When I let bitterness and unforgiveness live in my life, I am not able to experience God’s blessings in the present. Worry keeps me from experiencing the wonders of God’s creation in the present. It fills me so full of self, there is no room for God. When there is no room for God, there is no room for other people. Bitterness and unforgiveness drives me into a self-centered spirituality that does not include the needs of others. That is why I must daily allow God to drive bitterness and unforgiveness out of my life by spending time alone with the Lord in prayer and daily Bible reading.

I believe people grow old not because of the hardening of the arteries, but because of a hardening of the heart. Time and hopelessness wear us down as we travel down the journey of life. Yet I have learned that daily implementing the forgiveness factor keeps the heart of love from hardening. ***“We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day”*** (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The Message Bible expresses 2 Cor.4:16 in the following fashion: ***“We’re not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without His unfolding grace.”***

It is the reality of the presence of Jesus Christ, which breaks the hard shell of bitterness around us and gives us the power to forgive. By His emotional healing, we realize that the events of the past may have taken their destructive toll, but as we surrender to Christ, we understand that we can become better rather than bitter as we get older.

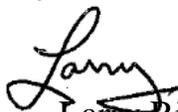
Now let’s take a deeper look at how the forgiveness factor by working in our lives allows emotional healing to take place.

1. Emotional healing begins when we let forgiveness flow as we follow Jesus, and we begin to become like Him. As this happens, we begin to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6), love as He loved (John 13:34-35), pray as He prayed (Matthew 6:9-15), and forgive as He forgave (Colossians 3:13). Our complete emotional healing takes on His personality traits, actions, and reactions to events. Our lives are modeled after Jesus Christ, as He becomes the focal point of our emotions and actions. In order for this to happen, it is absolutely essential that we pray and daily study the word of God.
2. The emotionally mature person, in whom forgiveness lives is willing to suffer as Christ suffered (Galatians 6:17, 2 Corinthians 4:10). We cannot get closer to Christ than to abide in His wounds, and let our hurts be filled through His love.
3. The more we become aware of the fact that we are sinners saved by grace, the more we appreciate that Christ has removed the plague of sin from our lives. The forgiveness Jesus provides frees us from the emotional roller coaster of a life of bitterness, and allows us to enter into the emotional healing, power and purpose that Jesus Christ has for each and every one of us.

It is a fact, your past no longer has to define your future. You may have been hurt by parents, friends or strangers, but you are now given the opportunity through the grace of God to be set free by forgiving them. It may seem like the hardest thing you have ever had to do, but it is also the most necessary. If you don't let the forgiveness factor go to work in your life today by first receiving Christ's forgiveness for your sins, and then forgiving others, you will waste the rest of your life.

Let the forgiveness factor of Jesus Christ flow through your life today to the extent you will forgive those who have harmed you. This is the day to be SET FREE from the ongoing struggle of living with the weight of anger, fear, bitterness and revenge that comes from a spirit of un-forgiveness. Tell God at this moment you are forgiving those who have harmed you and want to live the rest of your life in the freedom that forgiveness gives.

Yours in Christ,

  
Larry Rice