

Forgiving One Another

- ² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.
- ³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.
- ²³ Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.
- ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.
- ²⁶ And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,
- ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.
- ²⁹ Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.
- ³⁰ And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
- ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.
- ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.



Dear Readers



Sometimes we think that our world is the center of all things. These past three weeks I had the privilege of traveling to Asia and meeting many of those in Bible churches there. I was especially thrilled to meet widows and widowers in Asia. I

talked with them and listened as they shared the same things that you our *Chera* readers share with us. Some were excited to hear that we have an online source where they can find encouragement that is especially for them.

One widow lady and I had supper together. She had only been widowed one year, and it was sad and devastating for her to even talk about her husband. Yet she was so excited to hear about others like her around the world, that she was going to go home immediately and open up our website and read some of the things you and others have shared in our *Chera* Fellowship magazine.

So when you think that you are the only one experiencing a bad day, a lonely day, a day full of anger or grief – think of others around the world who walk that same kind of road. And the good news is: GOD IS ENOUGH for all of the world! He is able to minister in your life here in the USA and in their lives in Philippines or Japan or wherever in the world the needy people are. What a blessing our God is!

Be Honest with God

“O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it” (Psalm 139:1–4 NASB).

Do you ever feel angry with God? Go ahead and tell Him. He won’t get rattled. God’s self image doesn’t rest on your liking Him. He’s perfect. Besides, that kind of honesty is the stuff relationships are made of, and more than anything, God wants a relationship with you.

But there’s another reason to “let it all out”—God already knows. See Psalm Psalm 139:1–4. You’re not hiding anything. Everything we think or say is known to God, even before we know it ourselves. And still He is committed to having a relationship with us. He is committed to loving us in spite of what we say, do or feel. He is deserving of our respect, but He is also deserving of our honesty. Sometimes we need to vent full force, and with God that’s okay. You can be honest with God—He already knows.

—Charlene Perkins, from *31 Short Devotions on Grief*, used with permission.

www.ifca.org IFCA’s website has resources for you: recommended reading, starting a fellowship group, and encouragement for the newly widowed. Visit www.ifca.org and click on Ministry, then: widows/widowers.

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Forgiving Offenders



Jerry Sittser's wife, mother, and four-year-old daughter were killed when a drunk driver swerved into Jerry's lane, colliding head-on with the van he was driving. When the case went to court, a clever defense attorney managed to get the erring driver acquitted.

Since this issue's topic is forgiving, I wanted to print Jerry's account of how he came to terms with this totally undeserved miscarriage of justice. He wrote about it in: *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss*. However, the entire chapter titled, "Forgive and Remember," contains such wise and practical advice that it would be unfair to leave anything out. I urge you to get your own copy of this small but powerful book.

Jerry is a distinguished professor of theology and has been voted "Most Influential Professor" numerous times by senior classes at Whitworth College. He has written from his own struggles with loss, including emotional issues, spiritual quandaries, single parenting, and adjusting to a new way of life. He says, "Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Not only is forgetting impossible, considering the enormity of suffering, it is also unhealthy. Our memory of the past is not neutral. It can poison us or heal us, depending upon how we remember it. Remembering the wrong done can make us a prisoner to pain and hatred, or it can make us the recipient of the grace, love, and healing power of God" (p. 146).

The articles in this issue will help you evaluate whether you are harboring grudges, seeking revenge, or refusing to forgive someone. You will learn how to practice forgiveness and be released from hurts that may be holding you hostage. Jerry experienced this, and God has recently used him to write a sequel: *A Grace Revealed: How God Redeems the Story of Your Life*. His title says it all.

—Marcia Hornok, Managing Editor

Choosing Forgiveness

While Martin and Gracia Burnham were serving as aviation missionaries in the Philippines, they were kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf (Muslim) terrorists. Held as hostages for one year and 11 days, the Burnhams trekked in the jungle with their captors, who kept them hidden. In the gun battle that rescued them on June 7, 2002, Gracia was shot in the leg; Martin in the chest. His release from captivity took him to the glory of God's presence because he had trusted in Jesus as His Savior.

Gracia, also a believer, wrote *In the Presence of My Enemies* about her year of terror and adjusting to widowhood. Three years later she followed it up with *To Fly Again: Surviving the Tailspins of Life*. This inspiring book covers the lessons God taught her through adversity. At times Gracia felt stranded and isolated, living like an animal, but she remembered that Jesus was always with them. Stripped of all possessions and comforts, she was still God's child, and that truth stabilized her. She learned to stop blaming her captors. Forgiving them in her heart kept her from bitterness and resentment. Even now, she sends financial aid to her former captors, 23 of whom are serving prison terms. The following article is excerpted from chapters 4 and 10, with her permission.

*Do not judge others, and you
will not be judged.
Do not condemn others, or it
will all come back against you.
Forgive others, and you will be
forgiven.*

—Luke 6:37 NLT



Anger Doesn't Help

Anger in the face of trauma is understandable. But that doesn't make it productive. I found that as long as I blamed the Abu Sayyaf for our situation, my heart remained in turmoil. I blamed the terrorists; I blamed the Philippine military for their ineptness; I blamed the American government for not waving some magic wand to free us; I even blamed God because...well, He's in control of everything, isn't He?

Something inside us all yearns for justice and gets upset when life shows its unfair side. As Martin and I squatted around the cooking fire waiting for our portion, we would carefully watch the server pile rice on other plates but then give us only two-thirds of a cupful. I wanted to scream.

Slowly I began to realize that my resentment wasn't serving any useful purpose. The alternative, of course, was to forgive, even without the benefit of an apology from the offender. I could choose to forgive, all by myself.

As I forgave, the anger cooled down and the hurt went away. But then a new day would dawn, and a new injustice would erupt. I would be faced with a fresh need to forgive. This was a conscious decision I would have to make and remake as time went by. In fact, it became a pattern. And therein lay a path back to self-control and composure.

I did not pray, "God, help me forgive Musab." To do so would have been to dodge my own responsibility. Said Jesus: "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14–15). The task was squarely mine, although once I chose to obey, God certainly gave me the strength to do so.

Now that I am back in America rearing three teenagers, I have daily opportunity to practice what I learned in the jungle. The offenses are not nearly so heinous, of course. But my anger must still be defused. In fact, sometimes it is a bigger struggle to forgive little things than big ones.

Whenever you are hurt or wronged, your first inclination may be to lash back. Even if you thwart that urge, you may still cling to bitterness and resentment. In such a time, it's not hard to find someone who will sympathize and reinforce the anger. It feels good to hear, but it only serves

Forgiving people give up the right to punish and instead wish wrongdoers well.

—Dr. Jerry Sittser

to churn the spirit. It doesn't help the cause of restoration.

[Gracia wrote about another time:] I knew in my heart that I had to forgive this person. It was very hard. If I stiffened my back against forgiveness, not only would I be disobedient but the smoldering anger would sap my strength. I had to let go of righteous indignation and recognize that God's grace was big enough to forgive and heal. In other words, I had to remain humble and aware of my own tendency to sin. I prayed, "Lord, how can I forgive this sinner?" And the answer came loud and clear: "Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us" (Matthew 6:12). I chose in that moment to forgive.

The opposite of forgiveness is bitterness. When you let seeds of bitterness take root in your heart, your whole life becomes tainted. The bitterness you hold against one person soon spreads to others. You continue to collect offenses, seeing the worst in others, getting picky about little things, even plotting revenge. You become the loser. But Grace stands ready with open arms. All it takes to unleash it is one decision to give up your own way and choose God's way of forgiveness.

—Gracia Burnahm (with Dean Merrill), from *To Fly Again*, pp. 43–45, 99–100. Gracia has become a popular speaker, representing The Martin & Gracia Burnham Foundation for the support of Muslim evangelism, persecuted Christians, tribal mission work, and missionary aviation (www.graciaburnham.org).



On Forgiving Yourself

Never does the Bible talk about “forgiving yourself.” We are told to forgive others when they trespass against us, and to seek forgiveness. When we ask for God’s forgiveness based upon Christ having already paid for our sins and our having trusted in Him as Savior and Lord, He forgives us. It is as simple as that (1 John 1:9). However, even though we are released from the bondage to sin (Romans 6-8), we can still choose to wallow in it and act as though we are not freed from it.

Likewise with guilty feelings, we can accept the fact that we are forgiven in Christ, or we can believe the devil’s lie that we are still guilty and should therefore feel guilty.

It is for freedom that
Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not
let yourselves be burdened
again by a yoke of slavery.

—Galatians 5:1 NIV

The Bible says that when God forgives us, He “remembers our sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). This does not mean that the all-knowing God forgets because He forgives us. Rather, He chooses not to bring up our sin.

When our former sins come to mind, we can choose to dwell upon them (with resulting guilty feelings), or we can choose to fill our minds with thoughts of the awesome God who forgave us, undeserving though we will always be, and give Him thanks (Philippians 4:8). Remembering that our sins are forgiven should make it easier to forgive oth-

ers (Matthew 7:1–5; 1 Timothy 1:15) and draw us closer to God in loving obedience (Romans 5:10; Psalm 103:2–14).

God will allow our sin to come to mind for a good purpose—He wants us to accept His forgiveness and rejoice in His grace. So, the next time your former sins come to mind, “change the channel” by choosing to dwell upon His mercies and think about how we should loathe the sin. (From www.gotquestions.org, a free source)

“Entire industries exist for the purpose of easing our guilt, of making us feel OK about ourselves. What we now call forgiveness (as in therapy’s famous ‘learning to forgive oneself’) seems rather to take away the seriousness of the offense than to encourage acknowledgment of failure that could lead to repentance, and resolve to do better.

“Forgiveness is a gift, by definition unearned. If I cannot earn or work for forgiveness, I most assuredly cannot forgive myself. I may learn to live with my past, may understand it more fully, but I cannot forgive myself. Only God and those who love us can, through the gift of forgiveness, redeem the past, and make whole again.” (Karen Jenson Gold, from an article in *First Things*, Nov. 1992)

No wonder people have a hard time forgiving themselves! It is impossible. There is no tribunal but the heart of God, to which we may freely turn, freely pour out our sorrow for our sin, and receive the precious Blood of Christ. Jesus bore our sorrows, paid it all, took upon Himself all the sins that all mankind could ever commit. Isaiah 53 tells us, “He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed....He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Can we add to that? Is His sacrifice not adequate? Corrie ten Boom said, “God casts all our sins into the depths of the sea, then puts up a sign: NO FISHING.”

—*Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter* July/August 1999, (www.elisabethelliott.org/newsletters/1999-07-08.pdf), used with permission.



Our Great Savior

Jesus! what a Friend for sinners!
Jesus! Lover of my soul;
Friends may fail me, foes assail me,
He, my Savior, makes me whole.

Jesus! what a Help in sorrow!
While the billows over me roll,
Even when my heart is breaking,
He, my Comfort, helps my soul.

Jesus! I do now receive Him,
More than all in Him I find.
He hath granted me forgiveness,
I am His, and He is mine.

Jesus! what a Strength in weakness!
Let me hide myself in Him.
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing,
He, my Strength, my victory wins.

Jesus! what a Guide and Keeper!
While the tempest still is high,
Storms about me, night overtakes me,
He, my Pilot, hears my cry.

Hallelujah! what a Savior!
Hallelujah! what a Friend!
Saving, helping, keeping, loving,
He is with me to the end.

—J. Wilbur Chapman, 1910. Public Domain

Through the Storm

Dear Lord Jesus, give me strength, your strength, to be alive with your life today. In Jerry Sittser's book *A Grief Disguised*, at the end of chapter one, "The End of the Beginning," (last night even the chapter title reduced me to tears), I read: "I realized I would have to suffer and adjust; I could not avoid it or escape it. There was no way out but ahead, into the abyss" (p. 29).

The fog. The storm. The darkness. The emptiness. The hurt and pain. The aloneness. The confusion. The not understanding. All the whys? The abyss brought to mind Luke 8:22–25, where the Lord quieted the storm. Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us go to the other side." On the way, a great storm came up. Their boat was filling with water and their very lives were threatened. Jesus was asleep. The disciples, who were getting to know Him better every day, woke Him: "Teacher! Is it not a concern to you that we are perishing?" Or perhaps, we could read "we are destroyed."

We who have lost a loved one may indeed feel we are engulfed in a dangerous storm that threatens to overwhelm us, and we are not at all sure we will survive. We may feel that our Lord is asleep and seemingly unaware of the suffering and pain we feel, the emptiness and aloneness that has swallowed us whole. And we cry out to Him to wake Him, to inform Him, that our lives have been destroyed.



And in the sincerity of our heart we ask Him whether He cares.

Then it comes to mind that He is in the boat with us. That one thing alone gives us some hope and comfort. But why was He asleep at such a critical time? He could rest because He had already given His word on the matter. "Let us go to the other side." He did not say, "Let's go to the middle of the lake and drown." The Greek verb that we translate "to go" or "to cross over" has the sense "to go through."

Our Lord arranged this life lesson in the lives of those first disciples for our sakes who follow Him today. He did not take them around the storm but through the storm, and His word to us is, "Let us go through to the other side." How far is it to the other side? I do not know. But He will take us to the other side. There will come a time when He will say to this storm that engulfs us, "Peace, be still!" If we trust Him, He will not have to say to us, "Where is your faith?"

—Wesley Spradley, Wes and Donnie were married nearly 47 years when Donnie suddenly went to be with the Lord on May 10, 2014.

FROM GOD'S WORD

That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4).

Relationship conflicts are inevitable, going all the way back to Cain and Able. A classic case is Jacob and Esau who even struggled in utero (Genesis 25:22). Esau despised his birthright of God's Covenant given to Grandpa Abraham and bartered it to Jacob for a meal (25:34). Then Jacob deceived his father Isaac for the covenant blessing (Genesis 27). Both events were irreversible, but Esau severely regretted them and blamed Jacob (27:34-38). Hebrews 12:14-17 says Esau tearfully sought in vain to get his dad to repent, but Isaac let the blessing stand (see Hebrews 11:20). He must have known God's promises cannot be broken, and God had said the elder would serve the younger (Genesis 25:23). Jacob's reconciliation with Esau after a 20-year estrangement contains a pattern for us.

1. Genesis 27:41, describe how Esau felt about Jacob.

Who has wronged you and made you angry?

2. Jacob initiated contact with Esau. How did Jacob refer to himself and to Esau, and what did he ask Esau for? (32:3-5).

3. What was Esau's response? (32:6-8)

4. Jacob took precautions to protect his family. Try not to involve others unless absolutely necessary. Describe Jacob's feelings in 32:7-8

5. Jacob called on the Lord (37:9-12). Pray about your situation using Jacob's model prayer: He acknowledged his relationship with God. He affirmed his unworthiness. He asked God for deliverance. He admitted his fears. He assured himself of God's promises.

6. What did Jacob send to Esau? (32:13-21)

7. Forgiving involves a struggle. Read 32:24-32 about Jacob wrestling with God that night until dawn. List the ways this changed Jacob for the rest of his life.

8. Picture the scene: How did Esau approach Jacob? (33:1)

How did Jacob approach Esau? (33:3)

9. See Hebrews 11:21. Imagine Jacob limping and walking with a crutch. Perhaps Jacob's lifelong disability was God's answer to his prayer, as it probably made Esau sympathetic (33:4). Can you be transparent with your offender and admit your weaknesses?

10. Note Jacob's humility and the credit he gave to God in 33:3-11. No mention is made that Jacob and Esau discussed their past. Forgiveness and restitution, not rehashing the offenses, is what reconciles. Since a blessing had torn them apart, what did Jacob insist that Esau take, and what did Jacob call it (vs. 11)?

11. What did Esau suggest? (33:12,15) and what did Jacob decide (33:13-17)?

12. Although they lived in separate cities, they cooperated regarding family affairs (see 35:27-29). Does this mean you should become best buds, or will maintaining friendly contact be enough?



Anger and Blame

Lynn's grandmother missed her deceased husband most during her drive to church each Sunday. Her grandparents' Sunday routine was church attendance, then lunch at the same restaurant. It's the routines that seem to remind us most of our loss. Those are the times when we may feel abandoned by our loved one. We may even feel angry with the one who has "gone off and left us." Although it may seem terrible to be angry with someone who has died, it's a normal part of grieving. We can help ourselves immensely if we're able to talk with someone, a trusted friend, counselor, pastor, and of course, the Lord, about our anger. Allowing ourselves to "get it out there" can help to dissipate the anger we feel so that we can move through our grief and get to the other side.

Once we've done that, we may find it helpful to change some of our routines. When a routine can't be changed, we can imagine ourselves reaching out to take the Lord's hand so that He can walk us through that activity. We are not really going to church—or the movies, or to visit relatives—alone. We're going in the company of our Savior. Friends may move away or on to other friends. People we love and who love us may die. Ultimately, Christ is the only one who will never leave us, the only one we can count on to be there for us without fail (Hebrews 13:5).

This is a good time to become particularly conscious of His presence as you move from day to day. Why not spend some time today reevaluating old routines and making new ones? Plan to do these new routines with the Lord at your side. Then ask God to help you reach past your anger and face your pain with courage.

Lynn's friend, Anna, blamed herself after her husband's death because, even as he was having a heart attack, he insisted that it was nothing, it would pass, and told her repeatedly not to call for paramedics. With hindsight, of course, she could see that she should have ignored him. It was much easier for her to blame herself for not having been omniscient than it was for her to blame him for being pigheaded. It seemed unthinkable to "speak ill of the dead," despite the fact that, where his health was concerned, the term pigheaded was an apt description. Yet,

Principles of Reconciliation from Genesis 32–33:

1. Initiate contact and humble yourself (32:3–5).
2. Take precautions to protect your family (32:6–8).
3. Pray (32:9–12).
4. Show extravagant kindness (32:13–21).
5. Clear things up between you and God (32:22–32).
6. Meet in person, staying humble, respectful, and vulnerable (33:1–11).
7. Make restitution (33:10–11).
8. Maintain friendly contact (33:12–30).

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Anna couldn't be "disloyal" to him by describing him so.

Weeks later, when she received the autopsy report and realized that he had had a series of heart attacks over several years, each of which he had ignored, she finally allowed herself to feel the anger she had been dodging. And gradually, as the sting of her great loss faded, she began to say the word pigheaded without guilt and with love in her voice. It was one of the qualities that had endeared him to her. He had seen his family through numerous hard times because he had refused to quit when other men would have. Because Anna was finally able to face all of her memories of her husband, she kept his memory alive in a healthy way.

—Dr. Raymond Mitsch, from *Grieving the Loss of Someone You Love: Daily Meditations to Help You through the Grieving Process* (with Lynn Brookside), pp. 49–50, 98–99. Dr. Mitsch chairs the psychology department at Colorado Christian University. This helpful book was updated last year and is available online. (Reviewed in CF Summer 2014.)



Forgiving Who?

One of the things I look forward to in heaven is no regrets. This is especially true regarding an 18-year-old hurrying to get to school one day. Speeding down a residential street, she ran a stop sign and hit a man driving a smaller vehicle. Life-flighted to the hospital, he never woke from a comma. That man was my husband.

The day Kevin died, the girl's father came to my door to express his regrets. He told me who he was and I hugged him. I told him I knew his daughter had not intended to harm my husband. He left commenting that he had come to comfort me, yet he was the one comforted.

About six months later, with a loaf of freshly made bread and trembling knees, I visited the daughter. I talked with her and her new husband in their entryway. They seemed very guarded, but I reassured them I was not going to sue, and I said, "I forgive you." This family belongs to a church that teaches the false doctrine that your own works determine getting to heaven. I took this opportunity to share with them Kevin's testimony, and how the Bible teaches that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone.

On the anniversary of Kevin's death they came to our house and brought a peony plant, and my kids met her. I think it was important that my children saw that the cause of their father's death was not an awful person, but was someone who did a stupid thing, that had terrible ramifications.

Since the young lady was expecting, I decided to crochet a baby blanket for her. I worked on it while waiting for my kids at different functions, and people would ask who the blanket was for. What an amazing platform to share God's forgiveness!

But one friend was kind enough to confront me with an excellent question. "Why is it so easy for you to forgive the girl and so hard for you to forgive God?" Many times I had thought about God's sovereign timing that had resulted in Kevin's death. A second earlier and he would have been through the intersection ahead of the speeding truck; a second later and he would have braked in time. I also thought about how God had prepared us beforehand. Kevin had done many things that did not need to be done

"right then," but later I realized he left things in a good place for me and the kids. I could write another article on how God provided for us during our loss!

Playing a medley of praise songs on the piano one day made me stop and ask myself, "What kind of friend do I have in Jesus?" Immediately I responded, "He betrayed me!" I think He was waiting for me to get to the point that I could acknowledge God's right to do anything in my life, even taking my husband.

Before Kevin's death, verses like James 1:2–4 did not make much sense to me. "Consider it all joy my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." I was uncomfortable with the idea that God would use suffering to make me more like Christ.

Now I have a slight understanding of how God uses suffering to develop me and make me a better servant. My experience gives me the ability to comfort others and relate to them (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). I have also seen God accomplish great things through this difficult circumstance (Romans 8:28).

So, was I able to forgive God? Well, that is an interesting question. God does not do anything that requires forgiveness. Nothing He did to me was outside of His love and righteousness. But, I still had wrong feelings toward Him. Understanding this, I am able to say I forgive God.

—Barbara Leitch, Kevin died in 2008 at the age of 47. Barbara and her children involve themselves in various ministries including music, Awana, Christian camps, and service projects.



Dealing with Anger

It took three hours for me to drive to Fargo, where Nancy had been taken by helicopter. The cardiologist waited for me. “Your wife had a massive heart attack. We’ve placed two stents in the main arteries, but smaller ones are blocked also.”

From years as a hospital chaplain, as well as training, I knew logically that more procedures weren’t worth the trauma. But my heart was screaming, *this isn’t happening*. “What’s her ejection fraction?”

He was surprised at my technical question about her circulation. “Around 25.”

I’d seen a patient survive a year in that condition, but he was weak and helpless. Was I up to the job of caring for Nancy?

My son got a flight to Fargo and arrived the next day. Barton has a Doctorate in Engineering, and he dearly loved his Mom. In for the long haul, he patiently waited with me, and when his mom was able, he helped her Skype with loved ones who couldn’t get there. Soon our daughter Liana arrived from Orlando.

That evening a nephrologist (kidney doctor) came into the family room and asked me for permission to do dialysis.

“Why should we do it?” I asked. “Could she die without it or be uncomfortable?”

“Her creatinine level is creeping up.”

“How high is it?”

“The numbers won’t mean anything to you. Look, I’m the expert, and I’d like to do dialysis.”

So much for informed consent! I told him I’d think it over.

The next morning the nephrologist asked Barton if he could start dialysis, implying to him that I was not thinking clearly and was in denial. Since Nancy’s diagnosis with Alzheimer’s disease seven years previously, our Advanced Care Directives stated that no one was to give permission for her treatment except myself. Was the doctor able to ignore that? Were those directives invalid since we had crossed state lines? When I arrived, the doctor was already disinfecting the area to insert the needle for dialysis. “Get out of here,” he said. “I need a sterile field.”

I didn’t want to start a scene, but who could I ask to intervene? I walked out, but then a nurse came running

down the hallway and said, “You’d better get back in there. She just slipped into a coma.” He hurried to the family room to tell my children.

In Nancy’s room the heart monitor blasted its signal and showed an erratic pattern. Liana took her mother’s hand and Barton leaned over the bed. “We love you, Mom.” In a few seconds the EKG tracing went flat. Nancy died in peace, having been able in her last few days to talk to all of her offspring. If there is such a thing, and I think there is, she had a nice death.

The cardiologist and staff had been wonderful, but when I learned that the nephrologist was abusing the fact that Medicare doesn’t check for medical necessity, I filed a complaint about him.

During the next year I would often waken at night with internal rage over that doctor. How could someone who knew his way around hospitals as I did have let this happen? Why hadn’t anyone followed our Advanced Care Directives? What should I have done differently? As I lay in bed one night with an acid stomach, I suddenly realized what that doctor had done was dominating my life. Yet God had seen to it that none of us were harmed. I told myself I could forgive that doctor. Fixed on that thought I got to sleep.

The next morning I called the hospital, asking for the nephrologist, but he no longer worked there. I don’t know how he handled his guilt, but I was free of my burden. I haven’t thought about that problem for four years, until CF editors called for articles about forgiving. It works!

—Joseph P. Smith, Joe and Nancy were married for 51 years.

He now serves as the IFCA Director of Chaplains and has written *Tales of the Toe Tag Chaplain* about his experiences ministering to cancer patients as a hospital chaplain.



Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power.

Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify;
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.

Lo! Th'incarnate God ascended,
Pleads the merit of His blood:
Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Not of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.

[Refrain:] I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O there are ten thousand charms.

—Joseph Hart, 1759; refrain, anonymous, Public Domain

On Forgiving

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:13 NIV). I’ve read that unforgiving hurts the person who is unwilling to forgive, more than the person who needs forgiveness. I never understood.

As a young child, my older brother pinned me down in the living room and tickled me until I could hardly stand it. My mother in the kitchen, simply stayed away. When I was left alone at home with him, he did more inappropriate things, causing me to avoid him whenever possible. Years later, when I told my fiancé about it, he said he could feel the tension in me whenever my brother walked in the room.

Now I’m nearing the other end of my life and diagnosed with a brain tumor. My brother is almost 80. I realized, it’s now or never.

Over the years I have seen a number of therapists to help me deal with the aftereffects of my childhood. My current one has taught me to respect myself. “What do you want from your brother?” she asked. “You can’t seem

to let go.” It took me quite a while to realize that I wanted him to tell me he was sorry. I had no intention of hurting his wife, so I sent him cards telling him what I needed. He never answered.

The opportunity came at a family wedding. I knew I only had a minute before someone joined us. I got right to the point. “I want to forgive you, but I need to know if you ever felt sorry?” He talked right through my words, “I’ve regretted it, I’ve ALWAYS regretted it.” And just like that, it was over and I forgave him. After 65 years.

I knew I really had forgiven him when his birthday came and I sent him a gift. Now he writes me periodically. I understand how being unforgiving is hard on a person. A heavy weight I didn’t know I carried has been lifted from my shoulders. By God’s grace, I am free.

—Sandi Elzinga, Read her blog “GriefWalk” and respond to Sandi at <http://sandielzinga.wordpress.com>



Reconciled

The late Addison Leitch (Elisabeth Elliott's second husband) had a neighbor boy, David, who played in the field next to Addison's house. Back then BB guns were popular, and one day David pointed his gun at Addison's front window and pulled the trigger. The BB should have glanced off the window. Instead, the window broke.

David ran for home as fast as he could. He hid in his bedroom until dinner, and then did not eat much. His mother thought he was getting sick, but David knew his problem. Any minute the doorbell would ring, and David would be faced with his sin. For the next several days, when David was outside playing and spotted Addison walking home from work, David would run and hide to avoid him.

When nothing happened after ten days, David began to relax. Then one day as he was playing ball, he turned around and suddenly faced Mr. Leitch. "David, I want you to know that the window is fixed and paid for. Now shake my hand and let's be friends."

"NO!" David shouted, hiding his hands behind his back. "But the window is fixed, and I forgive you. You cannot keep running away every time you see me. So let's shake and be friends."

Slowly, David took Addison's extended hand.

The next day when Addison walked home from work, David left his ball game and ran to meet him. "Can I carry your briefcase for you?" From then on, David became like a son to Addison, who had only daughters.

This illustrates the relationship we have with God when we accept the reconciliation Jesus provided when He paid for our sins. "God demonstrates His own love for us...For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!" Through our Lord Jesus Christ, "we have now received reconciliation" (Romans 5:8-11).

God extends His hand of forgiveness to you. Have you taken it?

—MKH

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