

Set Free

Forgiving from the Heart

CHILL WITH GOD

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Forgiving from the Heart

Words from God

Written by Silas and Carol

A free book on being hurt, and what it takes to forgive from the heart, from a biblical perspective.

Chill with God
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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A Word to the Reader

If you picked up this book, something probably hurt you. It may have been a long time ago, or it may be fresh this week. Either way, you are welcome here.

This is not a book of quick fixes. It walks slowly through what the Bible says about being wronged and about forgiving from the heart: where to bring the pain, how to grieve, how to let go of the debt, how to bless, and how to find peace. Each chapter ends with a few questions and a short prayer. Read a chapter at a time. Rest between them.

A gentle note about safety. If you have been seriously harmed or are in danger, forgiving is never the same as going back into harm, staying silent, or being forced to reconcile. Please talk with a trusted pastor, a licensed counselor, or someone trained to help. In the United States you can call or text 988 for crisis support. If you are in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.



CHAPTER 1

The Pain Is Real

Before anything is said about forgiving, something needs to be said about hurting: it is real.

Being wronged is not a small thing. A cruel word, a broken promise, a betrayal by someone you trusted, a door slammed shut on you: these leave marks. Sometimes the mark is a bruise that fades. Sometimes it is a wound that opens again every time a certain name, song or season comes around.

Some people have been told, kindly or not, to just get over it. This book will not say that. God does not say it either. He sees the wound.

> *The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*
> **Psalm 34:18 (KJV)**

Notice what the verse promises. He is near to the broken in heart. He does not wait until you are healed to come close. He comes close because you are hurting.

> *Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*
> **Psalm 56:8 (KJV)**

Your tears are not wasted. They are noticed, counted, kept. Before you are asked to forgive anyone, you are invited to be comforted.

This is the first step, and it is a quiet one: stop pretending it did not hurt. You cannot hand God a wound you refuse to admit you have.

> *He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*
> **Psalm 147:3 (KJV)**

Take your time in this chapter. Forgiveness that skips over the pain does not hold. Forgiveness that begins by telling the truth about the pain can reach the heart.

REFLECT

1. What happened that I have been carrying? Can I name it plainly to God, even in one sentence?
2. Where do I feel it most: in my thoughts, my body, my sleep, my prayers?
3. Have I been telling myself it should not hurt this much? What would change if I let it be real?

A PRAYER

Father, You see what I carry. I will not pretend with You. Come close to the place that hurts, and bind it up as only You can. Let me be honest first, and trust You to lead me from there. In Jesus' name, amen.



CHAPTER 2

What the Bible Says About Forgiveness

Scripture speaks about forgiveness again and again. It never treats it as a small matter, and it never treats it as a cold duty. It treats it as the way of Jesus.

Jesus teaches His followers to pray about it every day:

> *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*
> **Matthew 6:12 (KJV)**

Right after the prayer, He comes back to it, so that we do not miss it:

> *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
> **Matthew 6:14-15 (KJV)**

These are searching words. They do not mean forgiveness earns God's love; His love was never for sale. They mean that a heart that has received mercy cannot stay closed to mercy for others. We forgive because we have been forgiven.

Peter once asked how many times a person must forgive. He thought seven was generous.

> *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*
> **Matthew 18:21-22 (KJV)**

Jesus then told of a servant forgiven an enormous debt who would not forgive a small one. His master's words at the end are sobering:

> *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*
> **Matthew 18:32-35 (KJV)**

Notice the phrase: from your hearts. God is not asking for polite words, a handshake or a smile for the sake of peace. He is asking for something deeper, and He knows it cannot be done by force. It is done by grace, in the heart, with His help.

Paul writes the same message to a church that had real hurts inside it:

> *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*
>
> **Ephesians 4:31-32 (KJV)**

And again:

> *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*
>
> **Colossians 3:13 (KJV)**

The pattern is the same in every passage. Look at what God has done for you in Christ, and let that become the measure. You are not asked to forgive out of your own supply. You are asked to forgive out of His.

REFLECT

1. Which of these verses speaks to me most strongly today? Why?
2. What does it mean to me that I am forgiven first, before I am asked to forgive?
3. Do I think of forgiveness as a burden, or as something God offers to carry with me?

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You forgave me a debt I could never pay. Teach me to see my own forgiveness clearly, so that I can give what I have received. Soften my heart where it has grown hard, and do the work in me that I cannot do alone. Amen.



CHAPTER 3

What Forgiveness Is Not

Many people find forgiveness impossible because they believe it means something it does not. Before going further, let us clear away a few misunderstandings.

Forgiveness is not saying it was fine. What was done to you may have been wrong, and it still is. Forgiving does not rewrite the past or call evil by a gentler name. Joseph said to his brothers, "ye thought evil against me," and he did not pretend otherwise.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Memory is not a switch. You may always remember what happened. God Himself says He will not remember our sins, but He is God; our task is not to wipe the mind blank. Forgiving means the memory no longer rules you. You can remember without being chained to it.

Forgiveness is not trusting again right away. Forgiveness is given freely. Trust is earned over time. You can forgive someone from your heart and still decide, wisely, not to put your hand back into the fire.

> *A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*
> **Proverbs 22:3 (KJV)**

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Reconciliation takes two people: one who is willing to forgive, and one who is willing to repent and change. You can only do your part. Paul puts it honestly:

> *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*
> **Romans 12:18 (KJV)**

Notice the honest words: if it be possible, as much as lieth in you. Some things are not possible. Your part is to release the debt; the other person's part is theirs before God.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. You may not feel warm toward the person for a long time, perhaps ever. Forgiveness begins as a decision, a choice to put the debt in God's hands, and the feelings often follow slowly, like the thaw after a long winter.

So what is forgiveness? It is letting go of the right to make that person pay, and handing the matter to God, who judges rightly. It is setting down a weight you were never meant to carry.

REFLECT

1. Which of these misunderstandings have I believed?
2. Have I been afraid that forgiving means letting someone off or being hurt again? What would God say to that fear?
3. What is one thing forgiveness does not require of me today?

A PRAYER

Father, give me a clear understanding of what You are asking. Take away the fear that forgiving means forgetting or trusting foolishly. Show me what is mine to do, and what is Yours. Amen.



CHAPTER 4

Bringing the Wound to God

Where do you take a wound that is too heavy to explain to anyone? The Bible's answer is the same all the way through: to God.

> *Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.*
> **Psalm 62:8 (KJV)**

Pour out your heart. The psalms are full of people doing exactly that: speaking plainly, even angrily, to God about what was done to them. He is not shocked by it. He would rather have your honest pain than your polite silence.

Telling God the truth might sound like this: This happened. It was wrong. It hurt me. I am angry. I do not know how to forgive. You do not need fancy words. You only need to be real.

> *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*
> **Psalm 55:22 (KJV)**

There is a second part to bringing the wound to God, and it is a brave one. David prayed:

> *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*
> **Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)**

Asking God to search the heart is not a way of blaming yourself for what was done to you. It is an invitation: Lord, show me what is in me, the anger, the bitterness, the need for revenge, whatever I have been hiding, so that You can heal it.

Bitterness is a quiet thing. It grows in the dark, and the Bible warns about it with a picture:

> *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*
> **Hebrews 12:15 (KJV)**

A root grows underground, out of sight, and spreads. Bring it into the light. God can pull out roots that you cannot.

Find a quiet place, perhaps by water or among trees, somewhere you can be still. Say it out loud if you can. Then be quiet and let Him be near.

REFLECT

1. Have I told God plainly how I feel, or have I only told Him what sounded right?
2. Is there a root of bitterness I have been hiding, even from myself?
3. Where is my quiet place to meet God, and when can I go there this week?

A PRAYER

Lord, here is the whole thing. I put it in Your hands, the hurt, the anger, the questions I cannot answer. Search my heart and show me what needs Your healing. I am tired of carrying this alone. Be near me now. Amen.



CHAPTER 5

Grieving What Was Lost

Forgiveness is often rushed because grief makes people uncomfortable. But there is almost always something to grieve: a trust that was broken, a relationship that changed, a season of life that cannot be given back, the person you hoped someone would be.

The Bible makes room for grief.

> *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*
> **Ecclesiastes 3:4 (KJV)**

Jesus Himself wept. He knew sorrow, and He does not hurry you out of yours. Grief is not a lack of faith; it is love's honest response to loss.

> *For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*
> **Psalm 30:5 (KJV)**

Weeping may endure for a night. Notice that the verse does not say the night is short. It says the night will end. Joy comes in the morning, and the God who brings it walks through the night with you.

Allow yourself to name what you lost. Write it down if it helps: I lost my sense of safety. I lost a friendship. I lost years. I lost the way I thought things would be. Each loss named is a loss given to God.

It may seem strange, but this is part of forgiving. When you refuse to grieve, the loss turns into anger. When you grieve, the loss can become sorrow, and sorrow can be comforted. God can comfort sorrow. He has promised to.

Do not be afraid of the tears. Think of the autumn lake: the leaves fall, and the surface is quiet, and the water does not hide the sky. Some seasons are for letting go of what has already fallen.

REFLECT

1. What have I lost because of this hurt? Can I name each loss to God?
2. Have I allowed myself to grieve, or have I rushed past it?
3. Who is a safe person, a pastor, a counselor or a trusted friend, with whom I can share this grief?

A PRAYER

Gentle Father, I grieve what was lost. I give You the empty places and the things that cannot be undone. Comfort me as only You can, and let the morning come. Amen.



CHAPTER 6

Releasing the Debt

This is the heart of forgiving, and it is simpler and harder than anything else in this book.

When someone wrongs us, something is owed. We feel it: an apology, an explanation, a punishment, an acknowledgment that what they did was wrong. Jesus calls these debts, which is why He taught us to pray, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

To release the debt is to say: I will not make you pay. I give the matter to God.

You may be waiting for an apology that will never come. You may wait for years for the person to understand what they did. Forgiveness does not depend on their answer. It depends on a decision in your heart, and on God's help to hold to it.

Joseph shows us what this looks like. His brothers had done him serious wrong, and years later, with power in his hands, he could have made them pay. Instead:

> *And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*
> **Genesis 50:19-21 (KJV)**

Notice what Joseph did. He did not call the wrong good. He said God turned it to good. He put the matter in God's hands, and he spoke kindly to the very people who had hurt him.

And look at Jesus, who forgave in the very middle of suffering:

> *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*
> **Luke 23:34 (KJV)**



Listen to My words, child.

There comes a moment when God speaks peace to your heart and says, “It is done.” Forgiving never meant forgetting. It means that when He says it is finished, you stop carrying it, and you move on, lighter than before.

IN CAROL’S WORDS AND HEART

The way this happens is quiet. You pray, perhaps many times, and then one day you notice that the weight is lighter. The debt is no longer something you are holding. God has taken it, and He has said it is done.

If you are not there yet, that is all right. Keep bringing it to Him. Say the words even if you do not feel them: Lord, I release this to You. Let the feeling follow in its own time.

REFLECT

1. Is there a debt I have been holding onto, an apology, an explanation, a payback?
2. What would it mean to put it in God's hands and leave it there?
3. What do I believe God is saying to me about this today?

A PRAYER

Lord, I release this debt to You. I give up my right to make them pay. You are the righteous Judge; I trust You with what I cannot fix. Speak peace to my heart, and let me hear that it is done. Amen.



CHAPTER 7

Praying for the One Who Hurt You

Jesus asks something of His followers that seems almost impossible:

> *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*
> **Matthew 5:44 (KJV)**

Pray for them. It is perhaps the hardest instruction in Scripture. It is also one of the most freeing.

Praying for the person who hurt you does not mean you are saying they were right. It does not mean you have to speak to them. It does not mean the pain is gone. It means that you are turning your heart from revenge toward mercy, and inviting God to do His work in their life, and in yours.

Start small. You may begin by only saying, "Lord, I do not want to pray for them, but I am willing to be made willing." God honors that kind of honesty.

Then, little by little, you can pray for their good: that God would bring them to know Him, that He would heal what is broken in them, that He would be merciful to them as He has been to you. Many people find that something changes in their own heart when they pray this way. The hold that person had on them begins to loosen.

To bless someone is to speak good over them, not in flattery, but in genuine wish for their well-being under God's hand. This is not weakness. It is the strength of someone who has been set free.

Blessing is not the same as returning to them. You can bless someone from a safe distance. You can pray for them and still keep your boundaries. Doing the one does not undo the other.

REFLECT

1. Can I say, even if I do not mean it fully yet, "Lord, make me willing to pray for them"?
2. What good thing could I ask God to do in that person's life?
3. How have I noticed my own heart changing when I turn from bitterness toward mercy?

A PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You prayed for those who hurt You. Teach me to do the same, even if I must start with a whisper. Have mercy on them as You have had mercy on me. Free my heart from the hold of this wound. Amen.



CHAPTER 8

When It Comes Back Again

Many people forgive and then, a week or a year later, feel the whole thing rise again. A memory, an anniversary, a sound, a face. The anger returns, and with it the question: Did it not work? Did I not really forgive?

This is normal. Forgiveness is often not a single moment but a path you walk. Peter asked how many times to forgive, and Jesus answered, "Until seventy times seven." That number may not only be about how often we are wronged. It may also be about how often we must choose to release the same wound.

Think of the leaves on a maple tree in autumn. You rake them once and more fall. Raking again does not mean you failed the first time. It means the tree is still a tree.

When the hurt returns, do not scold yourself. Gently notice it, and bring it to God again: Lord, here it is again. I choose to release it again. Help me.

> *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*
>
> **Mark 11:25 (KJV)**

Each time you choose forgiveness, the pull usually gets weaker. The memory may stay. The sting fades. One day you may realize you have gone a whole season without carrying it.

Be patient with yourself, as God is patient with you. He does not count the times you have come to Him. He only gladly receives you.

REFLECT

1. What tends to bring the hurt back for me?
2. What can I say to God, and to myself, when it returns?
3. Where have I already seen the sting grow weaker?

A PRAYER

Father, when the old hurt rises again, help me not to despair. I choose again to release it to You. Thank You for being patient with me, one day at a time. Amen.



CHAPTER 9

Boundaries and Safety

This chapter is important, and it is meant to be read with care.

Forgiving someone does not mean you must stay near them, trust them, or give them the chance to hurt you again. God does not ask you to be a doormat.

> *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*
> **Matthew 10:16 (KJV)**

Jesus said to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Wisdom and gentleness belong together. A boundary is not a lack of love. It is an act of wisdom.

A boundary might mean limiting contact, or ending it. It might mean saying no, or speaking only in the presence of others, or keeping some things private. It might mean that you forgive someone who has died, or someone you will never see again.

Please hear this clearly. If you have been seriously harmed, if you are or have been in danger, or if someone continues to put you at risk, your safety comes first. Forgiveness never means returning to a place of harm. It never means staying silent to protect the one who did wrong. It never means being forced into reconciliation.

If you are in danger now, contact local emergency services. If you need to talk to someone, please reach out to a trusted pastor, a licensed counselor, or a person trained to help with serious hurt. In the United States you can also call or text 988 for crisis support. God often works through wise and caring people, and asking for their help is not a lack of faith.

Forgiveness is between you and God. Safety is a gift God wants for you. You can have both.

REFLECT

1. Do I need to set or keep a boundary to stay safe and well?
2. Is there a trusted pastor, counselor or friend I can talk to?
3. Have I confused forgiving with allowing someone to keep hurting me?

A PRAYER

Lord, give me wisdom to know what is safe. Surround me with people who are kind and trustworthy. Let my forgiveness never be a way back into harm. Protect me, and lead me by Your peace. Amen.



CHAPTER 10

Forgiving Yourself

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is the one in the mirror. Maybe you reacted badly to being hurt. Maybe you stayed too long, or left too late, or said things you regret. Maybe you blame yourself for what was done to you, though it was never your fault.

First, a gentle word: if someone wronged you, the wrong belongs to them, not you. You do not need to carry what is not yours.

For the things that are truly yours, God has made a way:

> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
> **1 John 1:9 (KJV)**

God's forgiveness is complete. He does not hold a list of your failures over you.

> *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*
> **Psalm 103:12 (KJV)**

And there is this, a promise that can quiet a restless conscience:

> *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
> **Romans 8:1 (KJV)**

When you have confessed and received His mercy, to keep punishing yourself is not humility. It is a refusal to believe He has done what He said. Let Him be right about you.

If a voice keeps telling you that you are unworthy and unforgivable, remember whose voice that is not. God's voice, in His Word, is the voice of mercy.

You can learn from what happened, make amends where you can, and then lay the matter down. Lay it down as you would lay down a stone you have carried a long way.

REFLECT

1. What do I still hold against myself?
2. Is any of it something that was never my fault?
3. What would it look like to believe that God has truly forgiven me?

A PRAYER

Father, I receive Your forgiveness. Where I have failed, I thank You for Your mercy. Where I was wronged, I thank You that it was never mine to carry. Teach me to treat myself as You do: with truth and with kindness. Amen.



CHAPTER 11

The Peace Afterward

What comes after? Not a perfect life. Not forgetting. Not a return to how things were. What comes is peace.

> *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*
> **John 14:27 (KJV)**

It is not the peace that comes from everything going well. It is the peace that comes from a heart no longer at war. It is a quiet that rises when the weight has been set down.

> *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*
> **Philippians 4:7 (KJV)**

This peace can guard your heart, like a gate. It is not a gate that keeps love out, but one that keeps bitterness from coming back in.

You may find that you sleep better. You may find that you can hear a name without flinching. You may find that you can look at a lake, or a field, or a tree full of autumn color, and see only beauty, no longer a reminder.

You may also find that God uses your story. Someone else is carrying a wound like yours, and your quiet testimony, God healed me and I let it go, may be the light they need. You do not have to say much. Your peace will speak for itself.

> *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*
> **Proverbs 4:23 (KJV)**

Keep your heart. Not by walling it off, but by tending it, as a gardener tends a garden: pulling the weeds early, watering with prayer and the Word, and trusting God for the growing.

You were hurt. You brought it to God. You grieved, you released the debt, you prayed, you set your boundaries, and you received mercy. This is what it means to forgive from the heart.

The leaves have fallen. The lake is still. And the light is coming through.

REFLECT

1. What does peace look like for me right now?
2. How can I keep my heart, and what will I do when the hurt returns?
3. Who might God want me to encourage with what He has taught me?

A PRAYER

Lord, thank You for walking with me from the pain to this place. Keep my heart in Your peace. Let me live free, and let me live kind. Use even this for good. In Jesus' name, amen.

Go in Peace

> *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*
> **Psalm 46:10 (KJV)**

You are loved. You are not alone. And it is possible to be free.

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