

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO FORGIVE—

It Starts With Love

Forgiveness is the most powerful force I have ever known or seen. I have seen it immediately obtain the desired result. People have waited for years, tried all kinds of ways, means, and methods, and then they forgave. This opens a door so wide that nothing can stop the manifestation. What a wonderful thing to see people leap out of bondage into their full potential!

Remember, unforgiveness puts us in prison, which hinders us from coming to our greatest results. No matter what we can accomplish in prison, we can do abundantly more out of prison.

After thinking on forgiveness, reading the testimonies, and crying out to God for the answer, it is now clear to me that forgiveness is a part of love. Forgiveness is love. Love forgives! In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 these descriptions of love keep spelling out forgiveness. We will take a look at each phrase and break it down.

Love suffers long. To walk in forgiveness, we must be willing to suffer offenses. Many times offenses go on for

a long time. Unforgiveness is not willing to suffer long. It sometimes takes the offense immediately and other times sets a limit. Neither one works with love and forgiveness. When we walk in forgiveness, we deal with our own character flaws and receive grace to cover the faults of others.

Love is kind. It takes a kind person to forgive. A kind person considers others and their needs, not themselves. When we are kind to someone, it becomes very difficult to take an offense. Forgiveness desires to actively create contributions for other people's lives. Forgiveness looks for ways to give without expecting a return.

Love does not envy. James 3:16, states "For where envy and self seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." Sounds like the fruit of unforgiveness. A person who does not follow the teachings of Jesus is spelled out in 1 Timothy 6:4, "He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions." This verse describes a person who is in unforgiveness. Love forgives, and when we forgive, we love. No forgiveness, no love, but certainly plenty of envy. Forgiveness is not jealous or possessive. Forgiveness rejoices in another's victory.

Love doesn't parade itself. When we walk in unforgiveness we have to fight for our own spot and make sure we are taken care of. Forgiveness knows that the blessings always flow. Those who forgive will receive in due season if they faint not (don't take an offense). Forgiveness does not have to be right and prove the other wrong.

Love is not puffed up. When unforgiveness is involved, we like to point the finger at the other guy. We take the wide road and make excuses. Pride comes

from insecurity. Forgiveness gives you confidence; unforgiveness makes you puffed up. Forgiveness does not use belittling remarks to harm others. Forgiveness does not seek its own.

Love does not behave rudely. People in unforgiveness are not polite or easy to get along with. They don't care about others, but they are concerned for themselves. People who forgive treat others with fairness and kindness. They are flexible, willing to flow and not forcing their way on others.

Love does not seek its own. When we do not forgive, we are looking for our own. What's in it for me? You owe me. When we take an offense, we must start to take care of ourselves. Forgiveness allows God to take care of us. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. So while God is dealing with our enemies and taking care of us and all our needs, we are free to forgive, able to be creative and give to others. We don't have to take a thought for our own needs. Those with unforgiveness expect life to revolve around them.

Love is not provoked. Have you ever noticed that once you have taken an offense, it does not matter what the offender does? You are provoked. They walk in a room, and you get upset. They say hello, and you go on the defensive. Every word is heard as a word of offense. When we are blinded by our offense, we are unable to see any good thing the offender does. Forgiving people are not provoked. They are able to see beyond the action, to see the hurt of the person and be compassionate, not taking things personally.

Love thinks no evil. Love and forgiveness do not think "here we go again" when they meet someone who has done them wrong in the past. Forgiveness thinks good thoughts:

“That’s over, now we can go on. I knew they could make it.” Unforgiveness is looking for another fight, the next slip-up to be made. Unforgiveness is believing for the worst and usually getting it. Unforgiveness wants to complain because it mainly has been thinking on evil things. Forgiveness overlooks the failures of others and goes on.

Love does not rejoice in iniquity. When we have forgiven someone, we don’t get frustrated when we see them out of fellowship with God or man. It is good when the brethren dwell together in unity. Unforgiveness likes to find one more person who thinks like they do about the offender. Then they can get out the barbecue and have a roast together. Unforgiving people have taken an offense and then have a unique ability to find each other and rejoice in the iniquity of the mutual offender. Forgiveness is not being a talebearer or a gossip.

Love rejoices in the truth. Unforgiveness does not want to hear the truth, let alone rejoice in it. Remember Fred, who got bitter with his boss over the lost bonus? His two friends told him the truth in love. Fred said it was a good word, but he wanted to get even with his boss. When we walk in forgiveness, we are hungry for the truth. The truth is desired because that is what sets us free and keeps us free. A wise man receives reproof because he knows it is truth. Forgiveness rejoices in the success of others.

Love bears all things. Strong’s Concordance (#4722) tells us this means to roof over, i.e. (figuratively), to cover-over with silence (endure patiently). Forgiveness can forgive, forget, and move on. Unforgiveness wants to bring it-up over and over and over. There is no end to it. Unforgivers not only want to throw it in the face of the offender, but it is a topic of discussion with fellow offend-

ees and many times accompanied with the words, “I have already dealt with that.” If it is over, it is unlikely to come up again. If it does come up, there should be no pain or ill feeling associated with it. Remember, forgiveness is a powerful force. It gives us a strength that cannot be comprehended, an ability to bear up under a load that would crush most others, and a strength to bear all things, strength beyond human reason. Forgiveness covers the weaknesses and shortcomings of others.

Love believes all things. Forgiveness believes all things. This word, believe, means “to place confidence in, to trust.” When we have forgiven someone, we trust them; we place our confidence in them. I know what you’re thinking—I will forgive them but no way will I trust them again. Forgiveness and trust go hand in hand when there is a true restoration.

People have marveled at how I can forgive someone and even think about having confidence in them, let alone trust them. There have been people I was extremely close with who would turn and say and do all manner of evil against me. They take an offense, and can no longer think straight. I choose to forgive them before they ever take an opportunity to ask for forgiveness. When and if they come to the truth, I am able to restore them in spite of any mean things said or done to me.

Forgiving is God’s way, and we are commanded to follow it. Forgiveness does not stumble or quit because of the inconsistencies of others. This is the way to get people set free, to truly, without reserve, forgive them.

Let me plug in Tanya’s story here. She did not get total release the first, the third, or even the twenty-third time. She did get it, however, because she was fully for-

given, which included full restoration each and every time she faltered until she finally became completely free. Remember, love and forgiveness never fail. Here is Tanya's story in her own words:

I was between the ages of nine and thirteen when my path and course of life were already determined. Because of the many misfortunes that had happened to me during these tender years and not knowing the love and forgiveness of God, I began to hate myself and of course placed the blame on my parents.

I became driven by some unknown force that was in me. The more I hated and the more bitter I became, the more I was driven by this force of destruction. The root of bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness that I had carried in my heart had fully birthed itself in me. It was determined to control my destiny. I turned to drugs and pills. I became so consumed that I didn't care what happened to me, whom I hurt or whom I destroyed, including myself and specifically the men and women of authority in my life.

At this young age I started sleeping with any man who showed an interest in me. The more someone wanted to love me, the more I was determined to destroy him. I started drinking, not knowing how to deal with the pain, guilt, and shame. From that time on I was an alcoholic, harlot, and full-blown drug addict. I was on my way to hell in a handbasket and taking as many with me as I could. I can't express enough how ugly, miserable, and lost I was and the terrible devastating consequences it had brought in my life.

I had an abortion at age 13, moved away from

home at 18, was married at age 20, and divorced before I was 30. I continued in improper sexual activities, resulting in several female infections and other problems, including severe scar tissue. It all ended in my being unable to have children.

I went through a very traumatic divorce and had even destroyed my own husband. I lost everything—my home, my husband, and by this time all self-worth. I was a complete failure. If it were not for God, I honestly believe that I would be dead today.

With no hope left, I was invited to church by a friend. It was then that I was taken up under the wings of two very wonderful and wise people in my life. Here is where I learned my true destiny. I was disciplined, trained, and loved. I had to learn how to forgive and truly love, and it was hard for me to be honest with myself and God. It has been a process for me and sometimes very painful. But I didn't quit. I've learned that "winners never quit."

That once perverted and destructive drive in me has been purified, and I've been made whole. I praise God for His saving grace. My new drive is only to know Christ more. I give God all the glory for opening my eyes and teaching me His love, mercy, and forgiveness. God has and still is restoring back to me all that the devil has stolen. I have a wonderful husband, who is a man of God, a beautiful home, two precious children, and still so much more to come.

I still have to deal with offenses, for they will always come. The difference now is I win. No matter what the circumstance is or looks like, I am the victor and I'm free.

— Tanya Carter

It took someone to believe in Tanya to keep restoring her. She needed to know the love of God. She needed to know she was forgiven. She would be dead if she had not been forgiven. How many failures in life could be avoided, shipwrecks averted if only we could forgive and believe in them?

Love hopes all things. The word hope here means to expect. The trouble with life is you get what you expect. This word hope stresses the character of those who “hope” more than the action of hope. It shows the character of the one expecting.

General George S. Patton, the most successful and unforgettable general of WWII, was known for getting the job done. He had an expectation of his troops, and they didn’t let him down (19 Stars, page 233). The men of the third army were ordinary human beings. They were inexperienced and unschooled in war. They were not volunteers. Yet they fought with a morale and spirit that made them one of the most successful armies in WWII. “Patton,” said an officer “had the ability to deliver that indefinable something which makes men want to go out and give their all for him; to do just a little bit more than it is humanly possible to do.” General Patton was able to hope for the best, and he got it.

Look at your relationships. You will see that you get what you have been expecting—not necessarily what you wanted but what you expected. How many times have you said, “I knew it, I knew it. I tried to tell you.” These are words heard when the wrong thing was expected.

Forgiveness expects the best. Unforgiveness expects something less and too many times the worst. Forgiveness does not quit on a relationship when things go wrong.

Those who forgive stick with relationships, look for the best, and find it.

Love endures all things. To endure is to keep going. It is so easy to give up, especially if we are trying to do it on our own. Forgiveness has to keep going; it cannot quit. To endure takes a deep love, a lifestyle of forgiving. It has to be a way of thinking, a way of life. Otherwise we are one thought away from unforgiveness, one thought away from quitting, one thought away from giving ourselves a prison sentence. Forgiveness can overcome anything and endure even if it is not accepted or returned.

Love never fails. Forgiveness never fails. Forgiveness is the secret ingredient that is missing from most of life's failures. One bad decision leads to another bad decision. Trouble starts with one offense, and before you know it, we have three divorces and are working on the fourth. Forgiveness never stops or comes to its limit no matter how hard things are going.

Keep yourself on the alert as to whom you need to forgive and whom you are holding back. Whom do you need to go to and ask forgiveness so you can be forgiven and thrust forward? Be reminded that when we judge someone, we are guilty of that thing ourselves (Romans 2:1).

How do we forgive? We start by walking in the love of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts. If you don't have that love, you back up one step and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. Open up your heart and let Him in. Then you will be able to forgive, let go, and never be bothered with it again. Since to forgive is to let it go, I want to close this chapter with the words of a song called, "Let It Go" by the Super Mega Tones, a Christian singing group out of Sacramento, California.

After reading the words, be sure you have let it go!

Every day of your life
You'll have a chance to get into strife
Think about when somebody does you wrong
What do you do? What do you do?
We're going to try to tell you with our song
What to do? What to do?
Every day of your life?
You'll have a chance to get into strife
The lady in the checkout line's too slow
Let it go Let it go
Impatience only hurts yourself you know
So let it go Just let it go
Every day of your life
You'll have a chance to get into strife
The people around you don't know how to drive
Let it go Just let it go
Holding your temper could keep you alive
So let it go Just let it go
Every day of your life
You'll have a chance to get into strife
Think about when somebody does you wrong
Let it go Just let it go
That's what we tried to tell you with our song
To let it go Please let it go
Let it go Let it go Let it go
Just let it go!