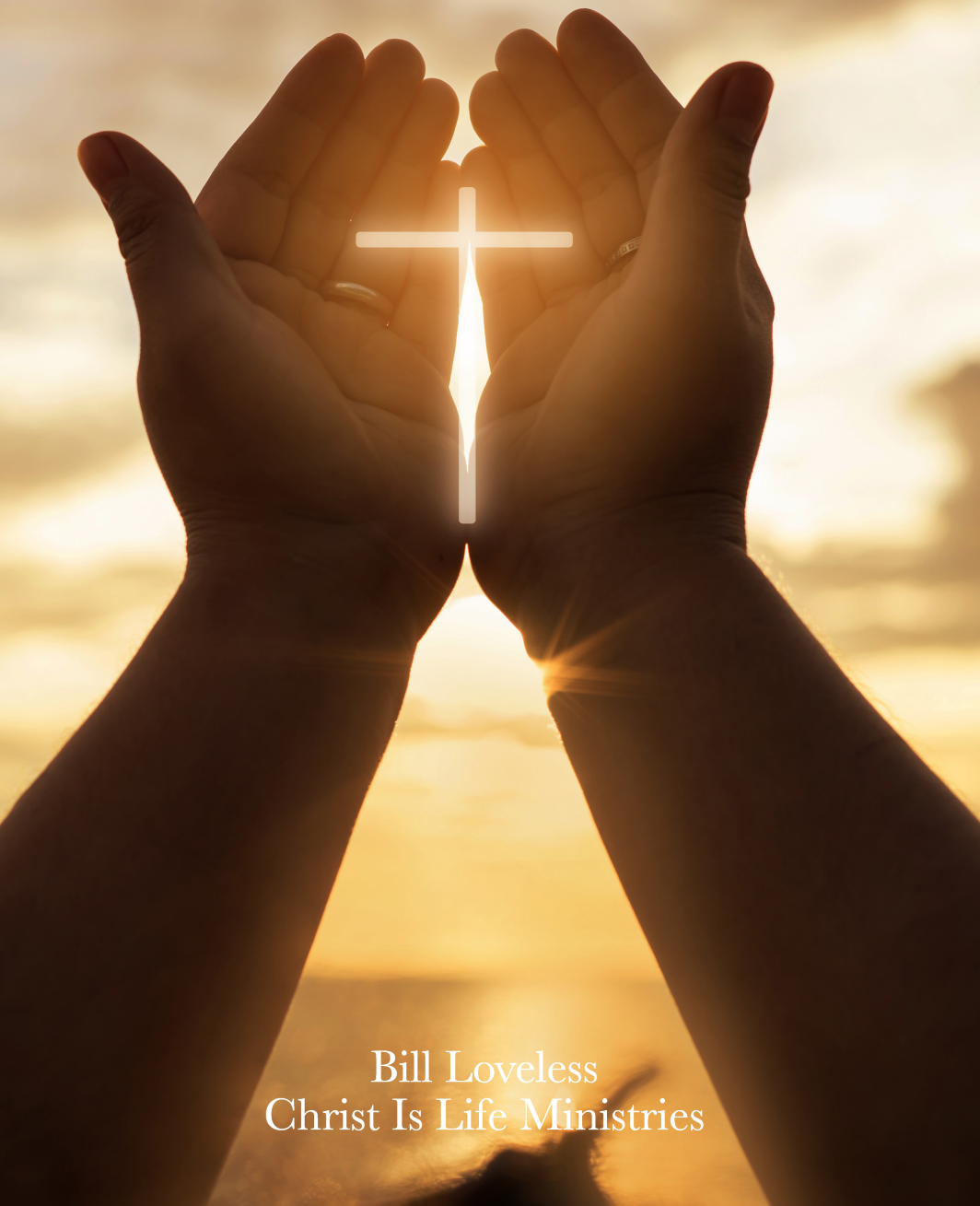


FORGIVE

(Will You?)



Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries

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Website: www.christislifeministries.com

Email: bill@christislifeministries.com

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Introduction

“Bear with each other and **forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**” Colossians 3:13

Why does Jesus talk about forgiveness throughout His life on earth? I believe it is because forgiveness is crucial to growing into Christ-likeness and because of the “death” that unforgiveness causes in us and to those around us. Unforgiveness creates a prison that only forgiveness will set us free from. I know because I lived in that prison for 48 years. However, God did set me free with the truths that I will be sharing with you in this booklet.

These are the topics we will be looking at:

- **The negative effects of unforgiveness.**
- **The reasons we try to justify our unforgiveness.**
- **The truth about forgiveness.**
- **How to engage God to give us a willingness to forgive.**
- **The results in us and through us when we forgive.**

Please don't be offended but I am writing this book for you assuming that you, as many do, struggle with unforgiveness. If you do struggle in this area, I trust the Holy Spirit will use this study to give you a heart and a willingness to forgive because on the other side of unforgiveness is freedom.

Chapter One

UNFORGIVENESS

What is UNFORGIVENESS?

Unforgiveness results when you:

- **take ownership of someone else's offense** towards you with the result that
- **you engage your flesh** which says, "I don't have to, or I don't want to, forgive that person."

Taking ownership of someone else's offense towards you simply means you receive that offense and allow your flesh to act on it.

Some examples of offenses would be:

- Verbal and non-verbal words of rejection, anger, guilt, shame, condemnation, etc.
- Abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, and/or verbal).
- Lack of being valued, loved, and/or accepted in the ways you expected or needed.
- Adultery.
- Abandonment.

Question: Can you think of someone in your life who has offended you and then you have taken ownership of that offense? Write that person's name down and the way(s) he/she offended you.

If no one immediately comes to mind, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if there is anyone you can't immediately bring to mind that you have not forgiven.

Question: What feelings come to mind when you think about that person and what he/she did to offend or wound you?

Where Does Unforgiveness Lead?

Unforgiveness leads to us to believe that we have the right not to forgive. The truth is that this is not a spiritual right; it is a “fleshly” right not to forgive. Why do I call it a “fleshly” right? When someone offends us, wounds us, or sins against us in some way, and we take ownership of the offense, our flesh fights back by saying:

“I have the right NOT to forgive.”

Before we go on, let me define a “fleshly” right.

Self-centered DEMANDS produced by our FLESH.

When our flesh has been offended, we often feel we must fight back. Our flesh is like a prosecutor that builds a case against the person who has wounded us. It is also like a defense attorney that builds a case to justify and defend our fleshly right not to forgive our offender.

This is exactly what happened to me as a result of the abuse by my father. As the prosecutor, my flesh would say, “Remember, all the abuse from your father? Remember when he _____? Remember how much pain he has caused? You didn’t deserve all that abuse.” As a defense attorney, my flesh would say, “Of course I have the right not to forgive because of all the pain and misery he has caused me. He deserves not to be forgiven. Therefore, I am totally justified in not forgiving him.”

Question: Do you feel you have the right to **not** forgive your offender? If so, why?

Reasons Why We Believe We Have the Fleshly Right Not to Forgive

The following are some examples of reasons why we feel or believe we have the fleshly right not to forgive.

1. This person does not deserve forgiveness.
2. This person has ruined my life.
3. Forgiving this person makes me look weak.
4. This person has to pay for my woundedness. They need to be punished.
5. If I forgive this person, that would mean I'm overlooking or condoning their offenses towards me.

Questions: Are you holding offenses against anyone? If so, do any of the reasons given above apply to you? Please write those reasons down.

Questions: Are there any other reasons not listed above that you believe or feel are justifications for **your** not forgiving your offender? Please write those down.

Chapter Two

The Consequences Of Unforgiveness?

In this chapter we will look at some of the consequences of unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness Negatively Impacts Your Thoughts and Emotions

Living in unforgiveness causes your mind to think, rethink, and perhaps even obsess about the wounding events and those who offended you. It is like being trapped in a mental squirrel cage that you cannot.

Emotionally, unforgiveness can lead you to unresolved frustration, anger, and bitterness towards your offender. Left unresolved, unforgiveness can cause you to be stressed, anxious, and even depressed.

Question: Are there any recurring emotions or thoughts that you feel may be a result of your unforgiveness? If so, please write those down.

Unforgiveness Allows Satan To Control You

*“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking **someone to devour**.” 1 Peter 5:8*

If you are living in unforgiveness, that “someone” in this verse is you. How exactly does Satan “devour” us? His many strategies include:

- Inserting angry, bitter, and unforgiving thoughts towards your offender.
- Tempting you to justify your fleshly right not to forgive.
- Helping you build and reinforce the case against your offender.
- Gaining a foothold in your thinking which unchecked can develop into a stronghold.

Question: Are there any other ways you think that Satan might “devour” you due to your unforgiveness? If so, please write those down.

Unforgiveness Eventually Builds a “WALL” Between You and the Person You Have Not Forgiven.

When you build a brick wall, you have to do so one brick at a time. Imagine each offense against you being a brick. When an offense occurs between you and another and is not dealt with, then brick by brick a wall is being built between you and that person. The longer you live in unforgiveness, the higher and thicker the wall becomes.

Your Unforgiveness Leads to Your Being Controlled by Your Offender.

The irony in unforgiveness is that as you continue to have recurring negative fleshly thoughts and emotions towards your offender, you become increasingly in bondage to them. Without any effort on his/her part, you have willingly handed control of yourself over to your offender.

This is like being permanently shackled or chained to your offender. As long as you continue in unforgiveness, you are shackled to this person and dragging him/her around with you wherever you go. You are choosing to keep the wounds and pain fresh when you won’t let go of the offender through forgiveness.

Unforgiveness Effectively Blocks Your Ability To Experience The Flow Of Christ's Life In You

I believe the most damaging consequence of unforgiveness is you block yourself from freely receiving the flow of Christ's life in you causing you to experience the "death" talked about in Romans 8:6:

*"The mind set on the flesh is **DEATH**...." Romans 8:6*

What does the word "death" mean in this passage?

"Death," as it applies to unforgiveness, is the BLOCKING the flow of Christ's life in you and through you.

By way of a reminder, here are some examples of Christ's life that are available to you:

Forgiveness	Unconditional love	Worth
Acceptance	Faith	Freedom
Patience	Strength	Peace
Victory	Understanding	Security
Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Power	Adequacy	Humility
Righteousness	Christ-confidence	Boldness
Selflessness	Rest	Compassion
Courage	Hope	Gentleness
Control	Faithfulness	Joy

Why is the consequence of unforgiveness the most devastating to your walk in Christ? Because you have effectively hindered the flow of all of the above characteristics of Christ's life in you. In other words, your unforgiveness hampers the flow of Christ's forgiveness, freedom, victory, love, etc. in you and through you.

The truth is that you have in you, through Christ, all of the Spirit's power. However, if you choose to live in unforgiveness, you are effectively (if not actually) impeding the Holy Spirit's power to overpower your flesh and Satan.

Not only that, you have chosen to obstruct the very power that is going to set you free from your unforgiveness, heal your wounded heart, and transform you to live with an attitude of forgiveness towards your offender. Therefore, if we choose to live in unforgiveness, it severely limits our spiritual progress and transformation.

Unforgiveness Makes You Toxic

Unforgiveness is like living in a toxic waste dump because its toxicity is destructive both to you and everyone around you. I understand because I lived in that toxic waste dump for years. I was toxic to myself because of my self-destructive behaviors and I was toxic to those around me due to my anger, controlling and manipulation. All because of my unforgiving attitude.

Unforgiveness Imprisons You.

When you have an attitude of unforgiveness toward someone, you have placed yourself in your own prison. Since you have in effect limited your receiving of Christ's life and power flowing freely in you, the result is your own custom hand-built prison made up of iron bars of anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness. Here is a further problem:

The LONGER you live in unforgiveness, the more FORTIFIED and REINFORCED your prison walls become.

Have you realized before now that the only person imprisoned by unforgiveness is the one who is not forgiving? It is like you drinking poison and expecting your offender to die.

Unforgiveness Results In Hardening Your Heart Towards God.

Unforgiveness can lead to hardening of your heart. In what way?

***Unforgiveness DISTANCES us from God
which results in our RESISTANCE to His
transforming work in our lives.***

This is a crucial truth because when distance creates resistance you will move further and further away from God which causes you to resist His healing work in you to set you free from your unforgiveness. Consequently, unforgiveness is not only toxic to you and those around you, it distances you from experiencing God's healing and continues to harden your heart towards Him.

Can you imagine how hard my heart was towards God and how distant I felt towards Him after 48 years of unforgiveness towards my dad and resisting God's invitation to heal me from the toxicity resulting from my unforgiveness?

Questions To Think About

1. What results of unforgiveness most apply to you?

2. How are the results you listed negatively impacting you internally, your relationship with others and your relationship with God?

Chapter Three

Key Truths About Forgiveness

I believe there are four key truths that are crucial in understanding forgiveness. Let's take a look at them.

TRUTH #1 – God Will Deal with Your Offender. Your Part Is To Forgive.

“Never 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.” Romans 12:19

The temptation of your flesh is to retaliate or get revenge on your offender. This will not lead to forgiveness. It will only lead to more sins and a greater resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit to heal you. Remember, there are always consequences of sins, so your offender does not get off the hook if he/she is not repentant.

There is a price to pay but that price will be determined by God and not by you. Believe me when I say this, God does not condone what happened to you. God knows all hearts and circumstances and He is the only just judge.

“...when [Jesus] suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”
1 Peter 2:23b

Therefore, leave your offender in the hands of God and move towards forgiveness, not revenge.

TRUTH #2 - In the Midst of Your Sin God Forgave You Unconditionally

*"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven us all our transgressions**"*
Colossians 2:13

God did not wait for you to confess and repent of your sins before you were forgiven. His forgiveness took place over 2000 years ago on the cross, long before you ever had the chance to repent of your sins. Your flesh recoils at this truth because it demands your offender confess and repent before you offer forgiveness.

Where would we be today if God dealt with us in the same way? The good news for you and me is that God's forgiveness is unconditional. The same applies to you and forgiving your offender.

***Your forgiveness must be UNCONDITIONAL
WHETHER or NOT your offender ever repents
of his/her offenses against you.***

Question: If you are struggling with this truth, is it possible you are believing your forgiveness of your offender is contingent upon his/her repenting to you first? What if they never repent?

TRUTH #3 – God's Forgiveness Is Complete

"It is finished." John 19:30

When Jesus said on the cross “It is finished,” He was saying, “I have paid everything in full.” This means past, present and future sins have all been paid for. Accordingly, as Christ has totally forgiven you, so should you totally forgive your offender. To confirm this truth, look again at the last part of Colossians 2:13:

*“...having forgiven us **all** our transgressions....”*

[Note: Forgiveness is an act of obedience to Christ and not based on feelings which likely will come later than the act of forgiveness. You may also need to repeat the exercise of forgiveness if there are multiple, deep and/or persistent woundedness caused by your offender. The key is to persevere in forgiving your offender in Christ. It took me 18 months to totally forgive my father.

TRUTH #4 - Since God Forgave You, He No Longer Holds Any Sins Against You.

“He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.” Psalm 103:12

*“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and **remembers your sins no more.**”*
Isaiah 43:25

*“... **having canceled out the certificate of debt** consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and **He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**”*
Colossians 2:14

When we read the passages above, we can see God has not only removed your sins, but He also no longer remembers them. In other words, He no longer holds your offenses against you.

If you were deep in debt to your creditors, how would you feel if you got a call from a friend saying he/she had totally paid off your debt? Joy? Freedom? Relief? We should feel that and even more towards the Lord because He totally canceled our debt of sins. He will never hold your sins against you. How do you think this applies to the debt created by the person who wounded you?

Because God has totally canceled your debt, then you are to CANCEL (forgive) the debt that was created by the person who wounded you.

Questions To Think About

1. Which of these four key truths impacted you the most? Why?

2. Which of these four key truths did you struggle with the most? Why?

3. If you not only believed but applied these four key truths to your offender, would you be more willing to forgive them?

Chapter Four

The Results Of Forgiveness

Now that we know some of the key truths about forgiveness, let's explore some of the results when we do forgive.

Forgiveness Frees Christ's Life To Flow In And Through You.

*"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, **he bears much fruit**; for apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:5*

*"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From **his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.**' "*
John 7:38

We said earlier that unforgiveness impedes the flow of Christ's life in you. Conversely, forgiveness allows the free flow of Christ's life (i.e., His love, acceptance, security, etc.), in and through you.

Forgiveness Tears Down The Walls Of Your Prison and Sets You Free

*"... you will know the truth, and the **truth will make you free.**"*
John 8:32

*"It was for **freedom that Christ set us free**; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1*

Just as unforgiveness built the walls of your prison, so forgiveness will tear your prison walls down and set you free. Your freedom will come in two categories: What you will be free

FROM and what you will be free TO. Let's look at some examples of both.

You are free FROM:

- Bondage and death caused by your unforgiveness.
- The frustration, anger, and bitterness towards your offender.
- The pain associated with your woundedness.
- Having to hold offenses against your offender.

You are free TO:

- Love your offender with Christ's love.
- Experience Christ's life in and through you. (i.e., His peace, rest, etc.).
- Have compassion for your offender.
- Be used of the Lord to move your offender to repent of his/her offense.

Forgiveness Gives You The Desire To Die To Your Fleshly Right Not To Forgive.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and **dies**, it remains alone; but **if it dies, it bears much fruit.**" John 12:24*

The "death" referred to in this verse, as it relates to forgiveness, is a turning away or realizing the death your fleshly right not to forgive produces. Therefore, as the Lord transforms your heart to forgive your offender, you will die to or move away from wanting to exercise your fleshly right not to forgive.

Forgiveness Will Be Part Of Your Healing

*"**He heals** the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
Psalm 147:3*

Forgiveness is an essential key to healing. We said earlier that forgiveness opens the way for you to be able to freely experience the flow of Christ's life in you. It also opens the door for the Holy Spirit's power to fully flow in you to begin the healing process of any woundedness caused by your offender. Thus, it stands to reason that the longer you stay in unforgiveness, the longer it will take you to heal.

Forgiveness Sets The Stage To Reconcile With Your Offender.

*"If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; **first be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and present your offering." Matthew 5:23, 24*

When it comes to reconciliation with your offender, forgiveness is the first step. Reconciliation involves both parties so if your offender is not willing to reconcile, then reconciliation won't take place. However, if you are walking in Christ's humility and forgive your offender, God honors that step on your part in restoring the relationship.

If you have forgiven your offender, but you have not reconciled, then I would encourage you to pray for reconciliation. I have personally witnessed a number of circumstances where the person who was wounded prayed for their offender and reconciliation took place. It is nothing short of supernatural but it can happen.

This was the hardest truth for me to grasp because reconciliation was out of the question. The sad thing was that by the time my heart had forgiven my dad and was willing to reconcile, he had already died. I admit to a certain sadness that dad and I could not reconcile on earth, but I know it will be a more wonderful reunion with him in heaven because of the forgiveness God brought about in my heart.

I would have loved to have seen what my relationship would have been like with my dad had we been able to reconcile in this life. So, I can't encourage you strongly enough to not only forgive, but to reconcile with your offender as soon as the Lord gives you the willingness to do so.

Let's end this chapter by looking at two other areas of forgiveness: forgiving God and forgiving yourself.

Two Other Forms Of Forgiveness

Forgiving God

You may be struggling with forgiving God for what He allowed to happen to you. The key truth we need to understand when it comes to your unforgiveness towards God is that God allows man free will to function. Because of the evil nature of mankind and the influence of Satan, terrible things can and do happen.

We can try to hold God accountable for those terrible things, but this is what He has allowed. But, you do not have to be held hostage to the woundedness He allowed. You can seek Him to give you the willingness to forgive Him and allow Him to heal your woundedness.

[Note: God is not the source of, nor does He initiate, the evil things that happen in this world. But God has the ability to bring good out of the bad things that happen to us, including our woundedness, if we let Him. This is the promise of Romans 8:28.]

Forgiving Yourself

You may be able to forgive the person who wounded you and God but you can't forgive yourself. You may have to forgive yourself because you may be holding yourself responsible for the wounding event. This is especially true when you were too

young to understand that what happened was not your fault. If you struggle with forgiving yourself, seek the Holy Spirit to give you that willingness because there is real freedom in forgiving yourself.

Questions To Think About

1. Which of the results of forgiveness impacted you the most? Why?

2. Which of these results did you struggle with the most? Why?

3. Do you agree or disagree with the idea of forgiving God? Why?

4. Is it possible you have not forgiven yourself for what happened to you? If true, how will you respond now?

Chapter Five

What Does It Look Like Practically To Forgive?

In this chapter, we will look at some practical truths and applications to help you experience forgiveness. Before we do, let me share some thoughts about willingness and forgiveness.

Woundedness and unforgiveness are strongly linked whenever you have been deeply wounded by another person. Because of the depth of the woundedness, you will be tempted with the lie that you could not possibly forgive this person for what they did. You can escape the temptation to embrace this lie by remembering that all of Christ's forgiveness is available to you to forgive the person that wounded you.

Let's look now at the practical steps to engage God to forgive your offender.

Engaging God

Now that we understand woundedness and the negative effects it has in our lives, let's look at some practical truths to engage God in order to forgive. Let's me first define what I mean by "engaging God."

***Engaging God means that we come to Him with
a WILLING heart, totally DEPENDING on
Him as our Source to give us the willingness to forgive.***

Why must we totally depend on God to give us the willingness to forgive our offender? Look at John 15:5 for a moment:

“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

There are two key truths in this verse. First, the physical branches are totally dependent on the vine for life. Similarly, we, as spiritual branches, are totally dependent on Christ for life.

Second, when Jesus says that apart from Him we can do nothing, please believe this truth includes your willingness to forgive. Absolutely! In the context of forgiveness, “nothing” means that we—apart from God—cannot produce the willingness to forgive. Our part is to totally depend on Him to produce that willingness. Let me share two key truths about what it means to engage God.

1. The Way We Engage God Is By FAITH.

*“Without **faith** it is impossible to please God.” Hebrews 11:6*

We know that God is the Source, but we have a part to play in God’s healing process as well.

Your part is to walk by FAITH by putting your FAITH totally in God.

Faith is simply coming to God with an attitude of total dependence and willingness for Him to give you a heart to forgive.

2. Engaging God By Faith Means Taking STEPS of Faith

*“For we **walk by faith**, not by sight.”
2 Corinthians 5:7*

It is a walk of faith not a sprint. A walk of faith means that it is one step at a time. The walk of faith begins with the first step. What does it mean to take a step of faith concerning forgiveness?

Examples Of Taking Steps Of Faith

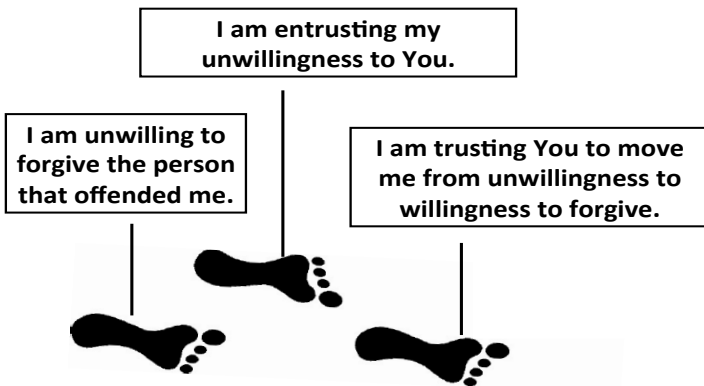
The problem concerning forgiveness is in our unwillingness to forgive. We know from the Bible that we are to forgive, but our will is resistant (because of our flesh) to forgive that person. I know this because of my unwillingness to forgive my dad for 48 years. However, God showed ~~to~~ me in a very supernatural way His ability to move me from unforgiveness to forgiveness using some of the steps of faith below.

Example #1: Let's assume that you are unwilling to forgive the person who wounded you.

The Truth: God knows you are unwilling and He is the only One who can transform your unwillingness into having a willing heart to forgive your offender.

Steps of faith: "Lord. I can't forgive this person for what they did to me. I know that I have no excuse for not forgiving but I simply am unwilling to do so. I am asking you to transform my heart so that I will be willing to forgive."

The following diagram illustrates other steps you could take if you are unwilling to forgive.



Example #2: Your flesh is persuading you that you have the right not to forgive.

The Truth: God completely forgave you for your past, present and even future offenses towards Him. (i.e., sins). Since He forgave you unconditionally, you have no right not to forgive.

Steps of faith: “Lord, continue to remind me that you extended me unconditional forgiveness so I have no right not to forgive. Remind me that you went to the cross for me so that I have no excuse for not forgiving.”

Example #3: You are saying to yourself, “If I forgive this person they may think that I am overlooking or condoning their sin.”

The Truth: God never condones or overlooks sin and neither should you. However, forgiveness does not in any way mean that you are overlooking or condoning their sin. In addition, you do not have to concern yourself with what your offender thinks. Your part is to forgive. Also, remember that God will deal with your offender’s sin. Since there are always consequences to sin, God will repay your offender.

Steps of faith: “I am afraid that if I forgive, I am telling my offender that I am overlooking their sin. Lord, persuade me that is a lie, that my part is to forgive, and that you will deal with my offender’s sin.”

Example #4: You don’t feel like forgiving.

The Truth: Forgiveness is a choice not a feeling. If you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, you can choose to forgive whether you feel like it or not.

Steps of faith: “Lord, I don't feel like forgiving _____ for what they did to me. I am asking You to give me the willingness to choose to forgive even though I don't feel like forgiving.

Questions To Think About

1. Which of the examples concerning steps of faith most apply to you? Are you willing to take those steps of faith? If not, why not?

2. What might be the results if you choose not to take steps of faith?

Chapter Six

Key Truths About The Forgiveness Process

Forgiveness Takes Time. It Is A Process.

When it comes to any part of God transforming our lives, I have discovered from those I have ministered to that they don't like the word "process." Why? When we seek God for changes in our life, we want it and we want it now.

Even though we know that God can give you a willingness to forgive instantly, my personal experience and my experience in walking with those seeking to forgive is that forgiveness will be, for the most part, a process.

In my experience, when it comes to forgiveness, how deep-seated your unforgiveness is determines how long the forgiveness process will take. It may be a long-term process if you have been deeply wounded.

God's Forgiveness Process Is Supernatural.

A key truth in understanding the forgiveness process is to grasp the truth that it is always a supernatural process. I define supernatural this way:

***A work that God accomplishes IN us as we walk
by faith for which there is NO natural or
man-made explanation.***

Who can explain supernatural? It is not explainable nor understandable. Even though initially I was unwilling to forgive my dad, I continued walking by faith until God supernaturally gave me the willingness.

Early On In Your Walk Of Faith You Will Need To Be Intentional.

Look at Matthew 7:8 to make this point:

“He who seeks finds...”

The tense of the word “seeks” means continuous action. In other words, what Jesus is saying in this verse is that your seeking must be ongoing and intentional. Early on in my walk of faith I was intentional about taking steps of faith.

Let me give you a personal example to explain. When I first learned these truths I am sharing with you and felt led to forgive my dad, I became very intentional by asking the Lord to renew my mind and transform my heart. I define “intentional” as a determined willingness to seek God to transform me.

For example, when you first learned to drive. Early on you had to be very focused and intentional about your steering, braking, and turning. You had to continuously think about all that was involved in doing that. However, as you continued doing those things, they became a habit that came automatically. That is what God wants to do in you early on in your walk of faith. He wants to develop a “holy habit” of your continuously seeking Him. As a result, He will soften your heart and give you a willingness to forgive.

Early On In The Forgiveness Process, You May Not Feel Or Experience God Working

As human beings who feel and experience life every moment, it is only natural to think that when we engage God to give us a willingness to forgive that we will experience His work in us from the beginning. For the most part, when you engage God to forgive, you may not initially experience God’s working.

Why is that? We see the answer in 2 Corinthians 5:7:

*“... for we walk by **faith** and **not by sight** [experience.]”*

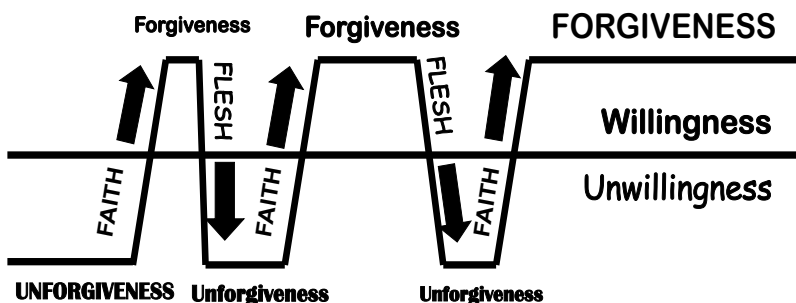
God has a two-fold objective in your transformation process. First, to teach you how to walk by faith. Second, to give you the willingness to heal. As much as we want God’s main thing to be about forgiving your offender, in my experience, God’s teaching us how to walk by faith is His greater priority.

You May Fail Many Times During The Process

Look at the diagram on the following page. There is a horizontal line. Below the line is your Unwillingness to forgive. Above the line is Willingness to forgive. Willingness to forgive above the line comes as you walk by faith and the Spirit renews your mind to the truth resulting in God’s transforms you to being willing to forgive. However, as you can see by the diagram you will succumb to the flesh, and the wounding thoughts and feelings will take you back below the line.

Why? Because of the grip your unforgiving attitude has on you. Especially if you have been living from your unforgiveness for many years. Satan is in the mix as well, tempting you to take ownership of wounding thoughts and feelings to keep you permanently below the line of your wounding thoughts.

When you do fall prey to your fleshly behaviors associated with your unforgiveness, you don’t need to wallow in self-condemnation. Rather, repent of your fleshly behaviors and take another step of faith believing that with each step of faith you are being set free in order to forgive. The diagram on the following page illustrates this point.

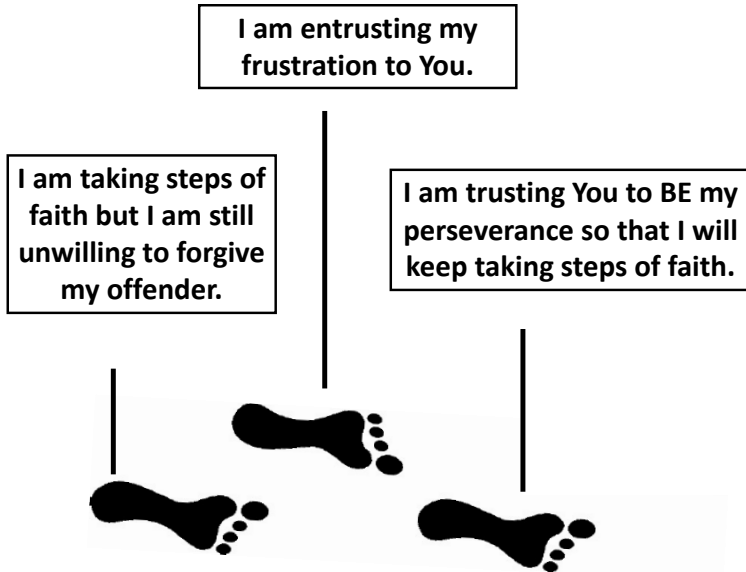


The important thing is to keep walking by faith even when you fall below the line because God is working in you even when you fall below the line. The key is not to give up.

During The Forgiveness Process, You May Be Tempted To Give Up On God To Heal You

When your timetable or any other expectation you might have about God's process is not being met, you may be tempted to be frustrated, impatient, etc. At some point, you may even want to give up on God's ability or willingness to transform you so that you will be able to forgive.

When you get to that place, seek God to give you the willingness to take another step of faith. In the example on the following page, you may be feeling frustrated because you are not experiencing a desire to forgive as quickly as you would like or expect. Instead of taking ownership of that feeling, at that moment entrust (give over) your discouragement to God and seek Him to be your perseverance to take another step of faith.



At Some Point You Will Experience A Willingness To Forgive

As you continue taking steps of faith, at some point you will experience a willingness to forgive. Let me share with you my journey to forgiveness concerning my dad.

As I shared with you, because of the deep woundedness from my dad's verbal, physical, and emotional abuse, I was angry, bitter, and unwilling to forgive him. The Lord obviously knew that I was unwilling to forgive. However, He spoke to me through my thoughts and said, "I know that you are unwilling to forgive your dad. Are you willing to let Me forgive your dad through you?" At that point, I was unwilling to forgive my dad, but I was willing to allow God to forgive my dad through me. Here is an example of the step of faith that I took:

Step of Faith: "Lord, I can't forgive my dad who abused and wounded me. I am asking You to BE my forgiveness and to

forgive my dad through me. I am trusting You to move me from unwillingness to willingness to forgive.”

Over an 18-month period of my intentionally seeking God by faith to forgive my dad through me, God began changing my attitude. He supernaturally transformed my will to a point where at the end of the 18 months, God asked me if I was willing to forgive my dad. I said, “Yes.”

As I continued to be willing to forgive my dad (it was not a one-time event), God removed the anger and bitterness and replaced it with His love. Not only have I forgiven my dad, I can now love him because of how the Holy Spirit changed my heart. This is one of the greatest supernatural works that God has accomplished in my life because I never thought that it would ever be possible to forgive my dad for what he did. He will do the same for you regardless of the depth of the unforgiveness you are experiencing.

[Note: Here is something to remember concerning forgiveness. Neither God nor I were excusing the abuse of my father. It was very real and very wounding. However, God says that He will work all things together for good in Romans 8:28. The divine good was that He changed my will by moving me to a place of forgiveness. There are still some effects of the woundedness, but for the most part God has set me free from the lying beliefs surrounding it.]

Celebrate With God When You Experience Changes.

“.....celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.” Psalm 145:7

Can you imagine how God would feel if you came to Him in praise and thanksgiving as you experience forgiveness towards your offender? I can promise you He gets excited every time His kids come to Him. He is so delighted, especially when we are

thanking and praising Him for the willingness He gave **us** to forgive. Celebrate with God the amazing, supernatural work He accomplished in you because He wants to celebrate with you!

Questions To Think About

1. Which of these key truths most impacted you? Why?

2. Which of these truths do you most struggle with? Why?

3. What might be the results if you choose not to be intentional in seeking God to transform you to forgive?

Chapter Seven

Acts Versus Attitude of Forgiveness

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a **HEART of forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”
Colossians 3:12b, 13a*

Sometimes people tell me they have forgiven their offender, but that assertion doesn't necessarily mean they have an attitude or a heart of forgiveness towards that person. You see, there can be an “act” of forgiveness towards someone in a moment of time for the wounding event they caused. In my case with my dad, there were several “acts” of forgiveness as the Holy Spirit would bring to mind specific events that I had to forgive my dad for.

Depending upon how deep the wound is, obtaining an “attitude” or a heart of forgiveness may be a much longer process. God's ultimate objective is to transform you so that you will have an attitude of forgiveness. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

A man was sharing how three men in his life rejected him in different ways. He told me that he had forgiven them, but every time that he or I brought them up, it was, for him, like sticking a knife into that wound and feeling the pain all over again. What I concluded was that even though he had extended acts of forgiveness towards them, he did not have an attitude of forgiveness because his woundedness had not yet been healed. This brings us to a key truth concerning an attitude of forgiveness:

***An ATTITUDE of forgiveness takes place
when God has HEALED the woundedness
associated with the wounding events***

Think about this: If your woundedness is not healed, you will have to forgive over and over again every time that person or the offense comes to mind. Therefore, God wants to heal you so that person no longer pushes your buttons of unforgiveness.

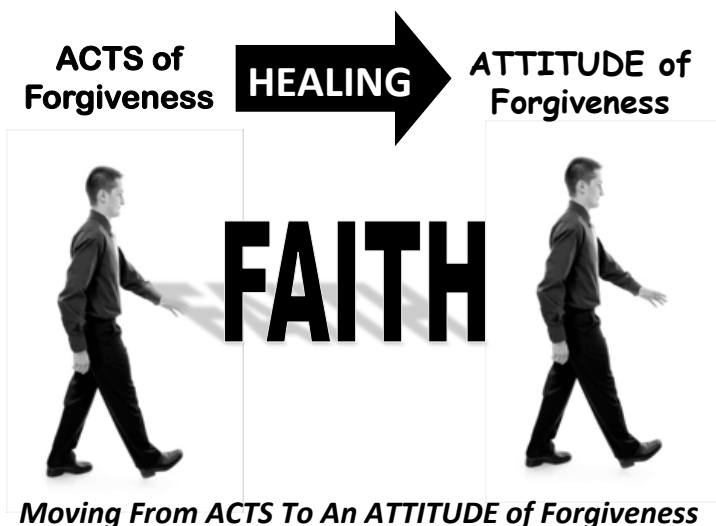
This is one of the great freedoms of unforgiveness. Over time I experienced this with my dad. Even though I had forgiven him, it took the Spirit some years to heal me from that woundedness. The result is that when I think of my dad, and I no longer harbor unforgiveness toward him. In fact, it freed me up to eventually love him even though he had already passed away.

Consequently, even though you may have made “acts” of forgiveness, an “attitude” of forgiveness may be a longer process because healing may be an extended process. Another way of looking at a heart of forgiveness is in Matthew 18:21,22:

*“Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, **but up to seventy times seven.**’” Matthew 18:21,22*

What is Jesus telling us in this verse? Is He telling us that we are to forgive only up to 490 times? I don’t believe so. I believe what the Lord is pointing out is that we are to live from a Christ-like attitude or heart of forgiveness. This attitude will come when the healing is complete.

The illustration on the next page reveals how initially there must be acts of forgiveness which eventually lead to an attitude of forgiveness.



Moving From ACTS To An ATTITUDE of Forgiveness

Questions To Think About

1. Why do you think it is important not only to have acts of forgiveness but an attitude of forgiveness?

2. In what ways does having an attitude give you freedom?

3. How might living with an attitude of forgiveness impact how you respond to the next person who offends you?

Chapter Eight

Juli's Journey To Forgiveness

This is a testimony by a lady named Juli that I believe will impact you in a profound way, especially if you have had trouble forgiving your abuser/offender. Here is Juli in her own words:

"The sexual abuse began when I was age 5. My parents had divorced when I was 4. I still remember standing at the front door, looking out of the glass crying, 'Daddy, don't leave. Come back. Come back.' He did not come back. When my mother remarried a year later I thought, 'Maybe this daddy will love me. Maybe this daddy will take care of me.' This other daddy was broken and angry and would not know how to take care of me, and so began the secret story of abuse.

"My stepfather was abusive in many ways--physically, verbally, mentally, and sexually. Both my mother and stepfather were alcoholics, so I lived in a world of uncertainty at best and in darkness, isolation, and secrecy every single day. I felt so much shame, unworthiness, and abandonment, and I felt that I was all alone. I believed that I was a failure and that I was not worthy to be loved. I believed that I must be very bad (I felt so bad, and I believed that I was bad). In addition, there was self-protection, unforgiveness, and fear. One of my ways of escape was excelling in school. I received various awards and accomplishments and had wonderful friends while keeping my secret hidden from everyone who knew me.

"In my sophomore year in college, it was time--time to tell the truth--time to uncover the horror and the lies that we all had been living in. I will never forget going home to confront my mother and stepfather. As we sat to talk, I actually thought, 'Now we will get some help and counseling. Now they will admit what has been going on, and we will begin to heal as a family.' All of the years of pretending that someone would actually care for me came to an end as they denied the truth. My stepfather said, 'Well, if anything did happen, it is your fault.' Instead of my

mother coming to protect me, she accusingly looked at me saying, 'Well, is it true? Did you provoke him?' My heart shattered, my life unraveled, and I clung to Jesus, the only hope and love I knew through some of the darkest days that I have known.

"I married, and as I held my firstborn daughter in my hands, I heard the Lord sweetly whisper, 'This is how beautiful you are to me. This is how precious you are to my heart.' Through the love that I had for my daughter, God continued to open up my heart to His unfathomable love and grace and mercy to heal my broken life. I began to grasp that Jesus is my life. He is my hope, my strength, and my resurrection. Jesus is the truth that I had longed for all of my life. I would not allow my stepfather to see my children (I had two more daughters) until he admitted the truth and sought counsel. This did not happen. It would be 7 years after my first daughter's birth until I would see my stepfather again.

******"My sister called me one day (she was my stepfather's daughter with my mother) in tears telling me that he was very sick and most likely was dying. At the time I was living in Dallas, and he was in a care facility in Austin. I just happened to be going to Austin that weekend and said that I would go see him for her. My first reaction was what I thought was righteous anger and vengeance for the pain and destruction that he had caused me all of those years. And so the Lord and I went to battle for my heart once again.

"Most often the Shepherd's voice is so kind and tender when He speaks to me. This time He was firm and unrelenting. He showed me a picture of the Grand Canyon, and my stepfather and I were standing on opposite sides. He said, 'There is only one difference between Joe and you, and that is the blood of my Son. That is the **only** difference. Do you really want him to be eternally separated from My love?' The battle raged in my soul. How could I forgive Joe? How could I release the weight of suffering that I had carried for so much of my life? Yet, when the battle was won, my heart was surrendered, and I went to see Joe

in obedience to the Lord with resolution that I did not want him to be separated from God's love.

"It was a short visit. I was only there for about an hour. When I walked into his room, my arms shot up above me, and I embraced him in a hug (much to my surprise)! We chatted about everyday things. I told him about my children, our marriage, and the life that I was living. When I left, I told him that I loved him and that I would pray for his healing and wholeness. As I walked out, my emotions were all over the place. There was peace, tears, ambivalence, and relief that I had gotten through our time together.

"Three weeks later I got the call from my sister that this time he truly was dying. He wasn't expected to make it more than 3 days. She was flying in from Colorado. I knew that I would go sit with him until she got there. I did not want him to die alone. This drive to Austin was much different. The first time I went out of obedience to the Lord. This second time I went out of love for Joe. I pleaded with the Lord to bring Joe to Himself. 'Please let him come to know Jesus before he dies,' I cried out in hope and anticipation.

"Upon entering his hospital room, I was filled with an unexplainable peace. I felt that the Lord was asking me to sit there and wait. So, I took Joe's hand in my hand. And I waited and waited, until he woke up and began to speak. He admitted what he had done to me all of those years. He spoke the truth – something that I never thought that I would ever hear. He asked for my forgiveness. And then he told me the most stunning part. He said that when I went to see him three weeks earlier, he knew that God would forgive him. It was my going in obedience to love that opened his heart to the heart of God.

"He had a son, my brother, who died at the age of 8. He knew what it was like to lose an only son. He said that God's only Son was enough - enough for his own forgiveness and healing and wholeness. God's Son Jesus was enough to forgive him and bring him into peace with His Father. I believe that Joe had been in the

very presence of the love of God those last three weeks. Jesus and His blood, His life, His love, and His resurrected power is enough. Jesus is enough for Joe. Jesus is enough for me, Jesus is enough for us all.

"The next day my sister arrived, and I helped her out in any way possible. In a few days it came time for me to go. By now Joe was going in and out of consciousness, so I walked up to his bed, kissed him on the forehead with his eyes closed, and I quietly said, 'It is time for me to go now, Joe, but I will be back. I will celebrate our reconciliation at your service and will celebrate what our good God has done! And some day, I will see you in heaven, and we will know each other as we truly are.'"

"As I finished speaking, Joe woke up, completely present, sat up in bed, took my hand in his, looked me clearly in the eyes and said, 'May God bless you, may He bless your family, and may you always be one with your children.' Power fell in the room with a palatable force. Joe had not been sitting in a men's bible study learning that he was to bless his children on his death bed. I believe that either that was the very voice of God speaking through Joe, or that he was speaking to me a blessing from heaven itself. The man who had cursed me since I was 5 years old, blessed me in his passing.

"This extraordinary gift of what transpired those last three weeks is what finally opened up the gates of my heart to receive more healing from the Lord's hand. Through counseling, prayer, the love of family and friends, weeping and more prayer, counsel, and the Word, I can honestly say that the abuse that I experienced has no hold on me. It neither defines me nor imprisons me.

"The compassion of the Lord took my broken heart and made it whole. The Holy Spirit is the wisest, most Wonderful Counselor. I believe and know and have experienced that I am His beloved in whom He is well pleased. The Lord delights in me. He has never left me nor forsaken me. God is my good, good Papa. Jesus is my Life. He is my healing. He is my redemption,

restoration, and hope.

This is a testimony of God's great and glorious love - of His forgiveness and pursuit of His people for their good and for the glory of His name. Amen!"

I hope Juli's testimony has encouraged you to seek God to give you a willingness to forgive.

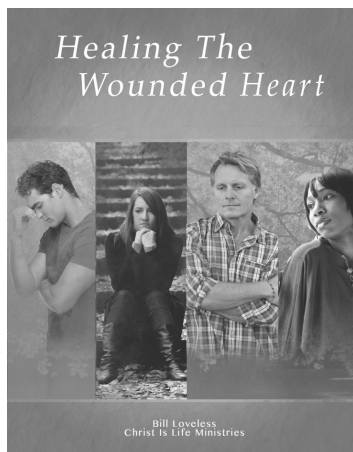
Summary

I pray that the truths in this study have encouraged you to at least begin taking steps of faith because if you take enough steps you will find yourself not only willing to forgive but eventually you will find yourself loving your offender. If that happens could you not say with Paul these words:

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21

Where Do I Go From Here?



Since unforgiveness is tied to woundedness, I recommend you read a study I have written called *Healing The Wounded Heart*. In it, you will learn about how to engage God to heal your woundedness. God used these truths in my life to heal my woundedness caused by my dad.

This curriculum is available on my website (www.christislifeministries.com). Online you may either download the curriculum for free or purchase a written copy of it which will be mailed to you.

I hope you will take advantage of this study and seek the Lord for a deeper understanding of His ability and willingness to heal your wounded heart.

Blessings in Christ,

Bill Loveless

P.S., If you have any thoughts concerning what you have read that you would like to share or have any questions about what I have written, please email me at the address below:

Christ Is Life Ministries

Website: www.christislifeministries.com

Email: bill@christislifeministries.com

Other Discipleship Booklets Available On Our Website:

- **Wounded (Healing The Wounded Heart)**
- **A Life? Or THE Life?**
- **Who Are You?**
- **Experiencing The Heart of God**
- **Stress? Or Rest?**
- **The Battle of the Mind**
- **What's Next**
- **What Did You Expect?**
- **Press On**
- **Your Marriage**
- **Resolving Marital Conflict**

(10-22-21)

FORGIVE

(Will You?)

Why does Jesus talk about forgiveness throughout His life on earth? I believe it is because forgiveness is crucial to growing into Christ-likeness and because of the death that unforgiveness causes in us and to those around us. Unforgiveness creates a prison that only forgiveness will set us free from. I know because I lived in that prison for 48 years. However, God did set me free with the truths that I will be sharing with you in this booklet.

These are the topics we will be looking at:

- The negative effects of unforgiveness.
- The reasons we try to justify our unforgiveness.
- The truth about forgiveness.
- How to engage God to give us a willingness to forgive.
- The results in us and through us when we forgive.

If you struggle in this area, I trust the Holy Spirit will use this study to give you a heart and a willingness to forgive because on the other side of unforgiveness is freedom.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. We teach Christians that Christ is our only Source for living the Christian life and what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness and be drawn into a deeper intimacy with Him.

For further information and to see the other materials being offered, please go to our website:
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