

# Forgiveness

*A Workbook* BY LINDA BRUMLEY

A winner rebukes and forgives; a loser is too timid to rebuke and too petty to forgive.

—SIDNEY J. HARRIS

To err  
is human,  
to forgive  
is divine.

Forgiveness

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— ENGLISH IDIOM

### *Defining Forgiveness.*

It is only imperfection that complains of what is imperfect.  
The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become  
towards the defects in others.

—JOSEPH ADDISON

*Forgiving is like falling upward.  
You have to work against the gravity  
of your own nature to forgive.*

—EDWARD M. HALLOWELL

*The glory of Christianity  
is to conquer by forgiveness.*

— WILLIAM BLAKE

Always forgive your enemies;  
nothing annoys them so much.

— OSCAR WILDE

*The weak can never forgive.  
Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong.*

— MAHATMA GANDI

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

— MOTHER TERESA

Blowing out  
another's  
candle will  
not make  
yours shine  
brighter.

— UNKNOWN

### *Analyzing the Offense.*

What happened? How were you harmed? What have you lost?

*When we forgive evil  
we do not excuse it, we  
do not tolerate it, we do  
not smother it. We look  
evil full in the face,  
call it what it is, let its  
horror shock and stun  
and enrage us, and  
only then do we forgive.*

## *Grieving the Loss.*

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

*I do not believe it is possible to truly forgive another person from the heart until we allow ourselves to feel the pain of what was lost. People who say it is simply an act of the will do not understand forgiveness.*

### *Determining Your Motivation.*

Why do you want to forgive?

The decision and ability to forgive has more to do with the value system we subscribe to and with our own natures than with the severity of the offense against us.

*In his heart a man  
plans his course, but  
the Lord determines  
his steps.*

## Overcoming Obstacles.

## What makes forgiveness hard?

- We can feel justice isn't served unless punishment is rendered.
- Our natures long to even the score, to undo the imbalance.
- We fear forgiving invites repeat offenses (Jude :23).
- We fear forgiveness makes us weak.
- Holding a grudge offers a measure of emotional satisfaction.
- Planning revenge gives us a false sense of being in control and restoring our injured pride.
- Blame reaffirms our sense of being right.  
Forgiving can feel like conceding that position of rightness.
- Plotting revenge can feel like we are taking action to right a wrong.

[illegible]

*Imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once their hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with the pain.*

— JAMES BALDWIN



### *Gaining Perspective.*

Put yourself in the other's shoes.

What is the best possible construction you can put on the offence?

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

*Be assured that  
if you knew all, you  
would pardon all.*

—THOMAS A. KEMPER

# Which gender is more forgiving?

It turns out that forgiveness is hard to do—and men just might be better at it than women. When men who have done the same naughty deed put themselves in an offender's shoes, they find it easier to forgive. But for women, empathy has the opposite effect. If we've committed the same transgression, the other person's offense actually seems less forgivable. "It's possible that women feel more shame when remembering their own offenses," says study author Julie Juola Exline, Ph.D., associate professor at Case Western Reserve University. Viewing someone else's action worse than your own is an attempt to ease feelings of guilt over your wrongdoing, she says. So if you're finding it hard to forgive, try forgiving yourself first.

—MARIA GIFFORD

Do you have difficulty forgiving yourself?  
What regrets are torturing you?  
How can you work with God to accept his grace?

*No man is ever innocent  
when his opponent is the judge.*

— MARCUS ANNAEUS LUCANUS

Therefore, as God's chosen people,  
holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves  
with compassion, kindness, humility,  
gentleness and patience. Bear with  
each other and forgive whatever  
grievances you may have against one  
another. Forgive as the Lord forgave  
you. And over all these virtues put  
on love, which binds them all together  
in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ  
rule in your hearts, since as members  
of one body you were called to peace.  
And be thankful.

— COLOSSIANS 3:12–15

When you forgive, you in no way change the past—but you sure do change the future.

— BERNARD MELTZER

Behind  
every jerk,  
there's a  
sad story.

— NELSON EVERETT WORTHINGTON

*Forgiving God.*

Is there pain in your life for which you hold God responsible?

*Blaming Satan.*

*A wise man will  
make haste to forgive,  
because he knows  
the true value of time  
and will not suffer  
it to pass away in  
unnecessary pain.*

To forgive  
is to set  
a prisoner  
free and  
discover that  
the prisoner  
was you.

— LEWIS B. SMEDES

*Repaying an injury puts you below  
your enemy; revenging one  
makes you but even with him;  
forgiving it sets you above him.*

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

When we hate  
our enemies,  
we are giving  
them power  
over us: power  
over our sleep,  
our appetites,  
our blood pressure,  
our health, and  
our happiness.  
Our enemies  
would dance  
with joy if only  
they knew  
how they were  
worrying us,  
lacerating us,  
and getting  
even with us!  
Our hate is  
not hurting  
them at all,  
but our hate  
is turning  
our own days  
and nights into a  
hellish turmoil.

— DALE CARNEGIE

## *Finding a Path.*

A variety of published strategies for forgiving.

Jesus, Matthew 5:43

1. Love your enemies (transform loathing into understanding).
2. Pray for those who hurt you (Blessings? Gratitude?).

Nelson Everett Worthington, Ph.D.

1. Don't wait for an apology.
2. Recall the incident and acknowledge your anger and hurt.
3. Empathize with your offender  
(i.e., write a letter to yourself from the other's point of view).
4. Perform a symbolic act (i.e., "hold a large stone at arm's length and drop it when you are ready to forgive"; make a ceremony of burning page 2).
5. Remember that in forgiving you are not forgetting.  
You may need to renew the pardon occasionally.

Ann Japenga

1. Embrace your anger. First things first: You need to feel righteous anger before you can move on. The time for release will come when your fury subsides.
2. Look beyond your pain. A person who does something vile may still have redeeming qualities. Your offender is loved by someone—mother, dog, or God. Remind yourself that there's more to him than his misdeed.
3. Speak no evil. To defuse your anger, try not to use derogatory language when speaking of the offender. You don't have fake affection, but avoid slander.
4. Study your dreams. Before falling asleep, focus on freeing yourself from resentment. In the morning mull over dreams that present the offender in a different light.

5. Think kind thoughts. Heap good wishes on the offender. Though this practice may be difficult at first, it will make him seem more human.
6. Persevere. Don't worry if forgiveness takes a long time to appear or if you just can't muster compassion. The important thing is to start. Simply by making the effort you'll be on the path to a lighter heart.

Charlotte vanOyen Witvliet, Ph.D.

Imaging

1. Imagine yourself extending forgiveness—feel the release of the anger.
2. Imagine yourself apologizing for your bitterness.

Frederic Luskin, Ph.D.

1. Begin by forgiving the small things. Work on forgiving traffic, long lines, late planes, the things that don't really matter.
2. Forgive those you love. We erect roadblocks, called grievance stories, which stop us from loving. The most important people to forgive are those closest to us.
3. Always practice first. You may not be ready to forgive someone today, but if you were, what would it sound like? Practice saying it to yourself, say, when you are alone in the car. That way when you are ready to forgive, it is available to you.

*Walking Your Own Path.*

Commit to a strategy of your own.

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*This is how forgiveness starts, not with a rush of compassion, but with a weary willingness to try.*

—ANN JAPENGA

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the left side and a slightly irregular edge on the right side, suggesting it might be from a notebook or a loose-leaf binder. The overall appearance is clean and minimalist.[illegible]

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*



## *Additional resources:*

Dare to Forgive

Edward M. Hallowell M.D.

Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving

Nelson Everett Worthington

Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve

Lewis B. Smedes

Forgive for Good

Frederic Luskin, Ph.D.

How People Grow

Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend

Island of Saints

Andy Andrews

The Unburdened Heart: Five Keys to Forgiveness

Mariah Burton Nelson