do yourself a favor... forgive
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LEARN HOW TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE THROUGH FORGIVENESS

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Jesus came that our sins might be forgiven and we would be restored to an intimate relationship with God through Him. His free gift of forgiveness is beautiful and beyond comparison. What God gives us freely He expects us to also give freely to others. Because we have received God's forgiveness we can forgive others who sin against us or harm us in any way.

If we don't forgive we will be miserable and our soul will be poisoned with the malignancy of bitterness. I have learned that when I forgive someone who has hurt me, I am actually doing myself a favor, and that knowledge makes it much easier for me to forgive quickly and completely. I would like to be able to say that I learned this principle early in my life and have not wasted precious time in unforgiveness, but I can't. It has taken me decades to learn what I desire to share with you in this book.

Unfortunately, we won't go through life and never get hurt, wounded, or offended. Experience tells us that life is filled with injustices. However, we can be free from the pain of these wounds by letting them go and trusting God to be our Vindicator and bring justice into our lives.

The roots of unforgiveness are very dangerous. They grow deep below the surface and take hold deep within us. They are insidious because they convince us that because we have been wronged, someone must be punished and that we cannot and
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will not be happy until they are. We want to be paid back for the pain we have endured, but only God can pay us back, and He will if we trust Him and forgive our enemies as He has told us to do.

I am sure that many who read this book will begin with anger in their hearts. Someone has hurt them or life has disappointed them. My prayer is that their hearts will be opened to God and they will see the urgent importance of living free from any kind of bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, or offense.

I believe that we have opportunities every week to be offended and become angry, but proper knowledge of God’s will gives us the courage to move beyond anger and enjoy the life God has given us. Staying angry at someone who has hurt you is like taking poison hoping that your enemy will die. Our unforgiveness hurts us more than it does anyone else. God never asks us to do anything unless it is going to ultimately be good for us, so we should trust Him and learn to freely forgive.

It is my prayer that as you read this book, you will learn that when you process anger in a healthy manner and when you forgive, the person you’re doing a favor for is yourself.
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It Isn’t Fair!

Susanna is a forty-eight-year-old woman who grew up on a remote farm in a tiny Texas town. Her parents were extremely poor, with little income and half a dozen children.

Susanna was the youngest, and her sunny disposition, pretty features, and unusual intelligence served her well from early on. She finished high school and went on to be one of the best salespeople where she worked in a small company that manufactured clothing. Eventually, she started her own business, manufacturing women’s apparel. She loved her business; it gave her a sense of accomplishment and value, and she gave herself to it wholeheartedly. She met and married the man of her dreams, and they had two children. As the years progressed, so did her business, and by the time she was in her early forties, she and her husband were running a multimillion-dollar company together.

Susanna and her husband enjoyed all that wealth could provide: a magnificent home, cars, boats, and a summer cottage. Their vacations took them around the world. Their two daughters attended the best schools and enjoyed the most prominent
social circles. They grew up and enjoyed successful careers and families of their own. Life could not have been any better, or so they thought. Although the couple attended church occasionally out of a sense of duty, their relationship with God was not personal, nor did they genuinely consider God's will when making decisions. Even the family relationships were more surface ones rather than deep, honest, and intimate.

One day, suddenly and without warning, Susanna learned that her husband was having an affair and that it wasn't the first time. She was shocked and deeply hurt. Not only was he unfaithful, but she also learned he had plunged the company into debt and a tremendous amount of the corporate money was unaccounted for. He had been taking money from the business she started and using it to entertain his girlfriends and live a secret life.

The marriage dissolved quickly, and Susanna was left with a business that was deep in debt and on the verge of collapse. Then the economy tanked and retail sales plunged downward, which resulted in Susanna's company going under. Her anger and bitterness toward her ex-husband, whom she blamed for everything, was increasing daily.

Susanna turned to her children for understanding and comfort, but they resented her for the years she had worked so hard and failed to spend much time with them. They also felt that part of their father's infidelity was due to their mother loving her business more than anything else in the world. They were busy with their own lives and ignored their mother's needs and problems just as they felt she had ignored theirs when they needed her. Susanna needed support, but there was none.

She turned to her sister, but believe it or not she seemed to revel in Susanna's distress. She felt that her years of success and “easy living” had made her selfish and inconsiderate. The
rift that ensued between them was massive, and they still don’t speak to this day after eight years.

Her children, while polite, don’t call often or invite her to visit. Susanna has become increasingly bitter and blames everyone else for her unhappiness. Not once has she considered that some of the problems could have been her fault, and not once has she even considered forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

She is angry with her ex-husband. She is angry with herself for not having seen that her marriage and business were falling apart right before her eyes. She is angry that her children haven’t done more for her, and she is angry at God because her life has turned out to be so disappointing.

**Who Wouldn’t Be Angry?**

Most people in this situation would be angry, but they wouldn’t have to be if they understood the love of God and knew that He has already provided a way out of this kind of misery. The number of lives that are ruined through anger and unforgiveness is astonishing. Some of them don’t know any better, but many of them are Christians who do know better but are unwilling to make the right choice. They live according to their feelings, rather than moving beyond them to do the better thing. They lock themselves in a prison of negative emotions and limp along in life rather than living it fully and vibrantly.

Yes, most people would be angry, but there is a better way: they could do themselves a favor and forgive. They could shake off their disappointment and get reappointed in God. They could look to the future instead of the past. They could learn from their mistakes and endeavor to not make them again.
Although most of us don’t find ourselves in such dire circumstances as Susanna was in, there is certainly no end of things to be angry about...the neighbor’s dog, the government, taxes, not getting the pay increase that was expected, traffic, a husband who leaves his socks and underwear on the bathroom floor, or the kids showing no appreciation for all you do for them. Then there are the people who say unkind things to us and never apologize, parents who never showed affection, siblings who were favored, false accusations, and on and on the list goes in a never-ending cascade of opportunities to either be angry or forgive and move on.

Our natural reaction is upset, offense, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness.

But who are we hurting by nursing these negative emotions? The person who committed the offense? Sometimes it does hurt people if we shut them out of our lives through anger, but quite often they don’t even know or care that we are angry! We walk around preoccupied with our upset, replaying the offense over and over again in our minds. How much time have you spent imagining what you want to tell the person who made you angry, all the while upsetting yourself more? When we allow ourselves to do this, we actually hurt ourselves much more than the offender.

Medical studies have shown that anger can cause everything from ulcers to a bad attitude. At the very least it is a waste of precious time. Every hour that we stay angry is an hour we have used and will never get back. In Susanna’s and her family’s case, they wasted years. Think of the times they missed in fellowship because of all the anger among them. Life is unpredictable; we don’t know how much time we have left with our loved ones. What a shame it is to deprive ourselves of good memories
and relationships because of anger. I also wasted a lot of years being angry and bitter because of injustices done to me early in life. My attitude affected me in many negative ways, and it overflowed onto my family. Angry people always take their anger out on someone because what is in us does come out of us. We may think we have our anger hidden from everyone, but it finds a way to express itself eventually.

The things that happen to us are often not fair, but God will recompense us if we trust and obey Him. Wanting revenge is a normal desire, but it is not one we can indulge in. We want to be paid back for damage done, and God promises to do just that.

For we know Him Who said, Vengeance is Mine [retribution and the meting out of full justice rest with Me]; I will repay [I will exact the compensation], says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge and determine and solve and settle the cause and the cases of His people.

Hebrews 10:30

This Scripture and others like it have encouraged me to let go of my anger and bitterness and trust God to repay me in His own way. I strongly encourage you to take the same leap of faith anytime you feel you have been treated unfairly.

The people we need to forgive usually don’t deserve it and sometimes don’t even want it. They may not know they offended us, or might not care, yet God asks us to forgive them. It would seem outrageously unfair except for the fact that God does the same things for us that He is asking us to do for others. He forgives us over and over again and continues loving us unconditionally.
It helps me to forgive if I take the time to remember all the mistakes I have made and needed not only God’s forgiveness, but people’s as well. My husband was very gracious and merciful toward me during many years while I was working through a healing process from the trauma of child abuse. My belief is that “hurting people hurt people.” I know that I hurt my family and was unable to build healthy relationships, but I certainly did not do it purposely. It was the result of my own pain and ignorance. I had been hurt, and all I thought about was myself. I was hurting, so I hurt others. I really needed understanding, confrontation at the right time, and loads of forgiveness, and God worked through Dave to give me that. I try to remember now that God often wants to work through me to do the same things for someone else.

Have you ever needed forgiveness—from people as well as from God? I am sure you have. Remember those times, and it will enable you to forgive when you need to.

**Please Check Your Anger at the Door**

Have you ever watched an old western movie where the cowboys were required to check their weapons at the door before entering a saloon? I have, and it is a good example to use when we think of anger. Anger is like a weapon we carry with us so we can lash out at people who appear to be on the verge of hurting us. Just like the cowboys would pull their pistols to defend themselves unless they checked them at the door, we pull our anger in defense on a regular basis. Let’s form a habit of consciously leaving our anger at the door before we enter anyplace. Let’s refuse to take it with us when we go out for the
day. Consciously say, “I am going out today without anger. I am taking love, mercy, and forgiveness with me and will use them generously when needed.”

I have found that talking to myself is a big help. I can talk myself into things and out of things. I can talk myself into getting angry and into getting over being angry. Learn to reason with yourself. Say to yourself, “It is a waste of time to stay angry and it is displeasing to God, so I am going to purposely let it go.” I remind myself that I am doing myself a favor by choosing peace and refusing anger.

We may not feel like doing the right thing, but we can either live to please God or to please ourselves. If we choose pleasing God, then we will do many things that will be the opposite of what we might feel like doing. We all have feelings, but we are more than our feelings. We also have a free will and can choose what we know will be the best for us.

**Anger Is Strong and Destructive**

Anger is indignation, vengeance, and wrath. It begins as a feeling and progresses to expression in words and actions if it is not checked. It is one of the strongest passions and is very destructive. God's Word teaches us to control anger because it never produces the righteousness that He desires (James 1:20).

We are instructed by God to be slow to anger. When we feel ourselves starting to boil over with anger, we need to put a lid on it. We can stir ourselves up and make our problems worse by thinking about and talking about them, which equates to feeding them... or... the minute our feelings start to rise up we can do something about them. Be aggressive against the emotion of
anger and say, “I refuse to stay angry. I refuse to take offense. God has given me self-control, and I will use it.”

I was told a story about a pastor who invited a guest speaker to his church. The pastor was sitting in the front row of the church listening to the speaker, when without using wisdom the speaker began to say some negative things about the way the pastor handled some of his church business. He was making a general comment and I am sure not intending to offend anyone, but his words were critical and cutting. While the speaker was speaking, the pastor softly repeated in a whisper, “I will not be offended, I will not be offended.” He was an older minister who had more wisdom than his speaker. He recognized the zeal of his guest but also knew that the speaker lacked knowledge. The pastor refused to let his guest’s words offend him.

I know what this is like because I am on television sharing the Gospel message, and I hear other people in ministry who are not on television make negative statements about “televangelists,” which is what they un-lovingly call those of us who are called to the media ministry.

It is very easy to judge someone if we have not walked in their shoes, and when I hear people make unkind comments, I try to remember that they are talking about something they know nothing about. People say things like “Those televangelists are just trying to get people’s money.” “Those televangelists don’t do anything to build the church; they are just out for themselves and are not kingdom-of-God minded.” Of course, there are some people in every profession who have impure motives, but to lump everyone into that category is totally wrong and not in agreement with Scripture. When I hear things like this or am told that someone said these things, I decide not to be
offended, because it won't change anything and certainly won't do me any good.

When I invite people to receive Jesus Christ on television, our ministry receives an overwhelming response. We send them a book that instructs them to get involved in a good local church, but that might be something that a critic does not know. I am committed to doing what I know God has called me to do and not to worry about my critics, because I won't answer to them at the end of my life but to God alone.

It is easy to judge others, thinking we know “the whole story.” But very few of us do; that's reserved for God. I am sure you have examples of your own, and the best thing to do is to pray for the person whose words brought offense, make a decision not to take the offense, and choose to believe the best of them. We should all pray that we don't hurt others or give offense with our own words.