**Peace**



**For Your**

Soul

***It is Ok to Forgive***

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**Nancy L Harry**

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Peace for Your Soul

It is Ok to Forgive

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**Introduction**

Is inner peace missing in your life? Do you feel troubled, on edge, unhappy, bothered? Do you wonder, “Where is the satisfaction, serenity, calm, quietness in my soul?

* Do you wonder why you never feel at peace?
* Do you continually rehash offenses as you anguish over them?
* Do you live with resentment and bitterness?

Find God’s answer for dealing with hurtful offenses. Learn to say goodbye to hanging-out with resentment.

“The LORD blesses his

People with peace.”

Psalm 29:11

It is time to receive this blessing!

Chapter 1

### The Dance

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y journey to find inner peace turned out to be the longest and hardest for me. So many situations in life can cause those disturb-ing feelings of resentment, agitation, anger, unsettled…

Jesus said:

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

**Fear and Worry**

Fears and worries can keep us on edge. This attitude finally caused Job to say:

“What I feared has come upon me;  
    what I dreaded has happened to me.

I have no peace, no quietness;  
    I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Job 3:25-26

I heard the Lord whisper: “Come to me with all your questions, with all your doubts, with all your fears. Let me blow them away and give you peace. Peace in your heart and in your mind and in your soul.”

We will know a peace that can come only from God, as we go to Him and trade our worry and fear for trust in Him. We can be secure in the faithfulness of God.

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” 1 Peter 5:7 NLT

Joy, peace and love are found in God’s presence. He offers blessings and joy in this life. Isn’t it wonderful we don’t have to wait until we get to heaven?

I heard the Lord say, “Come dance with me. Let me be your leading man.”

According to my well-used Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, *dance* is a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music. It is the art of dancing.

I think of dancing with a partner as moving in unison – moving as one. It is a wonderful reflection of our walk with the Lord.

The Lord wants us to know Him, to see Him in a different light. He is not far away. He is not unattainable. Know He is close by. Our prayers reach His ears. He is God of the universe; watch what He can do.

Do you want to know how close God really is? Look at partners dancing. See how close they are standing together? The Lord wants to be that close to you.

The man normally begins by moving for-ward and the woman moves backwards. As she moves backwards, she can’t see if something is behind her. Does she dance with fear and panic, because she doesn’t know what is coming up? No. Actually, she is completely relaxed in her partner’s arms, trusting him to guide them.

God said to me, “Let go of your fears, let go of your doubts; trust in me. I will guide you.”

As the man starts moving, his partner moves with him. He does not run over his partner. But how did his partner know it was time to move, where to move, how to move?

The man usually leads in dance. And, the woman focuses on the man: watching, sensing, feeling the slightest movement. This gives her the ability to move with him in perfect unison. He guides and leads her with the slightest pressure of his hands and movement of his body.

Are you watching, sensing, feeling the slightest movement of God, of the Holy Spirit within you?

**Move with God**

Most of the time, the man leading in dance cannot be seen taking place. Yet, the partner moves easily. It is not necessary for him to yank or throw his partner around, to get her to move in the direction he wants.

God doesn’t want to do that either to get our attention. He prefers to be a gentleman. As you begin to sense Him moving, begin to move with Him in perfect unison.

Let me break this down even more. Before the dance begins, a couple has to know that the man starts with the left foot and the woman with the right foot. They have to know who will do the leading. So, some knowledge is needed.

In the same way, if we want to move with God, we need knowledge of how God works. This we learn by reading and hearing His Word.

**Preparation**

Now, what can be done to prepare to start dancing? Since the woman knows she will be moving her right foot first, she stands with her weight already on her left foot, leaving her right foot free to move the instant she is led.

Prayers are good preparation for us to move with God. Praying helps us learn to listen and discern His voice, and know the feel of His presence. Then, we can follow instantly, when we feel His movement or hear His voice.

Jesus said:

“When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice” John 10:4. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11

The Lord is saying: “Come and dance with me. Focus on me. Move with Me. I AM your leading man.”



Is He your

leading man?

**A Spot for Him**

God created inside each person a spot for Himself. He did not want to force His love on us or force us to love Him. Yet, His deepest desire is to have a relationship, a flow of love between us. The part of us that is reserved for Him feels unsettled or empty, as if something is missing, without this relationship. A sense of inner peace comes, as we make this connection.

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2

Sin or disobedience to God’s ways followed the generations down through the ages. It de-mands the punishment of death. But God made a way to fix this problem. He sent His Son, Jesus, to stand in for you and me. Why? Be-cause of His great love for us. Jesus took upon Himself our fate. His sacrifice brought us back into God’s favor.

Even though our parents may have been Christians, or a close relative was a preacher, or we went to church, or we are basically won-derful people; this will not wipe away our sins and qualify us for eternal life – in God’s loving presence. Yet the answer is simple. Maybe too simple for some, but easy just the same.

All it takes is to believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior; the One who gave His life for you. The One who then rose from the dead, conquering death.

“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9



Trust God;

His specialty is the impossible.

Chapter 2

**Heartaches**

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olding on to heartaches turned into my own private monsters:

“Oh, the anger and the pain, the hate, the bitterness that overwhelms my whole being. See what he has done to me. Look and see and feel the pain and sadness he brought into my life. The frustration envelopes me and the anger grows like its own being inside of me. I feel like I will burst. How I want to run away and hide, to be alone to lick my wounds.

My soul cries out to God, “Save me from such undeserved treatment.” Does God hear me? Where is He?

I cannot shake this anger. It lingers on and on, year after year, eating away at my heart. Who says, “Forgive?” How can they know what I've suffered? I laugh in their faces. He deserves my anger. He deserves my hate.

I ask God to let His revenge fall upon him. Finally, he is gone. But wait, where is the peace? The anger, the pain, and the bitterness all rage on.

Forgive? It sounds so foreign. Is that a word I'm supposed to know?

The flesh heals quickly. But my heart con-tinues to bleed and my soul continues to weep. Will healing ever come? The anger eats away at me like a cancer. My body is sick; my mind is sick. “Help me Lord! Where is your peace?”

“Forgive. Forgive.”

“I don't want to forgive. He doesn't deserve forgiveness. Look and see what he's done. See the pain he caused in my heart.”

But my anger does not reach him. It does not affect him. Like a boomerang it comes back to me, constantly fanning that flame of rage and lingering hurt.

Forgive? But he is not even sorry. He feels no regret. He does not seek my forgiveness. Hate overwhelms me. Lord, it hurts to hate so much.

**Time Goes On**

Time doesn't heal the memories. I bury the anger. I hide the pain. But like a snake ready to attack, it rises to lash out. Its venom poisoning my soul. “Lord, forgive me for hanging on to this anger that embitters me. It keeps me far from you. I miss your closeness.” Prayer is not easy in the midst of such hatred and anger.



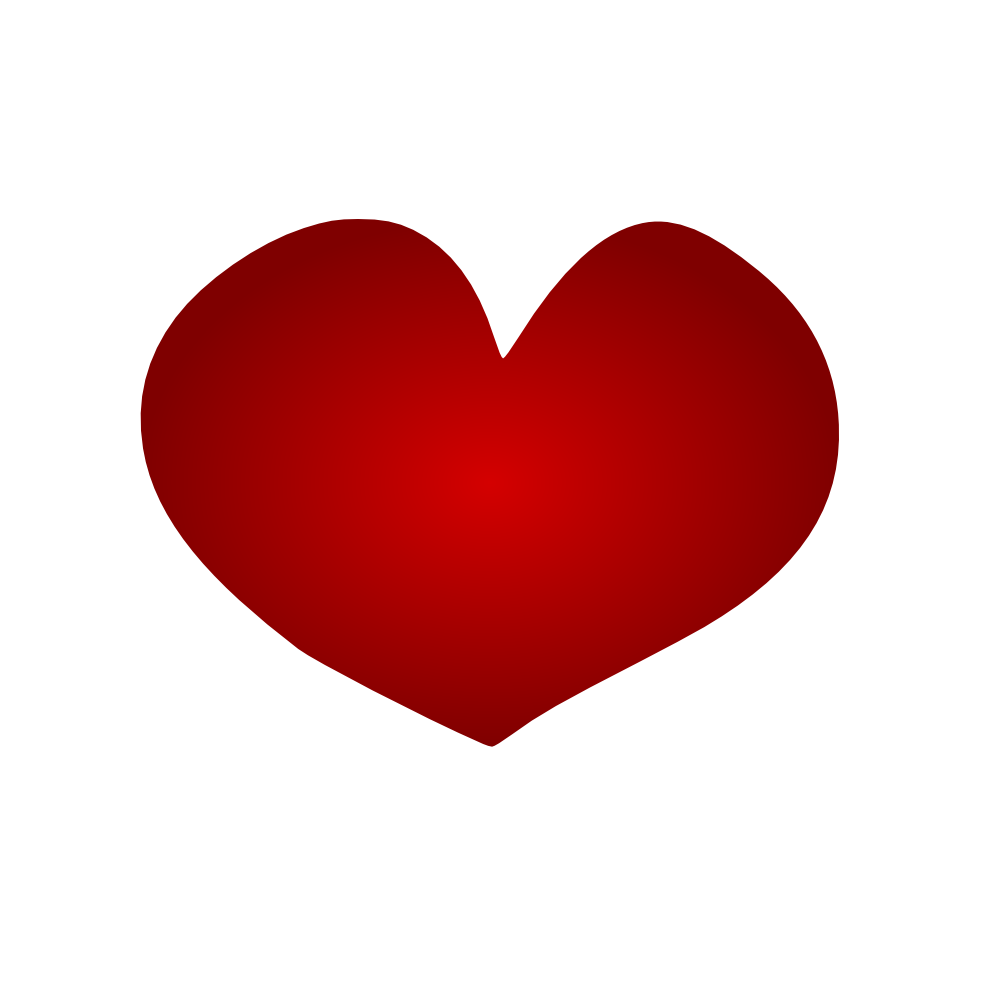
Memories left me with years of nightmares, resentment and bitterness. I didn’t know how to get free from all those hurtful feelings. I didn’t know how to get past the emotional pain and the anger in my heart every time something remind-ed me of that time in my life. Peace escaped me. And more than anything, I wanted a sense of peace.

Even though we were no longer together, I was still so aware of the pain and sadness he had brought into my life. Someone would say, “Forgive.” As the anger lingered on, I’d think, “How can you ever know all I've been through?”

**The Search**

I searched for peace in churches, at con-ferences, in seminars, and by reading self-help books. Still I found no sense of peace; only bitterness and resentment filled my soul.

As time went on, the memories didn’t heal and the scars on my heart festered. Years passed, as I continued to search for freedom from these controlling emotions.



I prayed, “Lord, I need your forgiveness for hanging onto this anger. Teach me to forgive.” My attitude slowly began to change, as God worked on my heart.

**A Special Speaker**

One day my eyes caught sight of an ad for a special speaker coming to a nearby church. My heart would not be still. Something kept prompting me to be there. As I listened to this speaker’s message, my heart opened to receive the answers and peace I sought for – for so long.

This faithful servant of God spoke about the wonderful forgiveness God provided for me through His Son Jesus, the Christ. He sacrificed His life for me and for you too.

“He was pierced for our rebellion,

crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.” Isaiah 53:5 NLT

As this man spoke, I began to gain a new understanding of God’s love and His forgive-ness.

**Righteous and Good**

I asked myself, “Was I so righteous and good that I didn't need forgiveness?” The Bible says: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23. “The wages of sin is death” Roman 6:23. I deserved death for my sins.

Only Jesus lived a sinless life. He deserved to live. How great is His mercy and grace; how bountiful His love to take my place on that dreadful cross.

Was I there to ask Jesus for His forgive-ness, as He was crucified for my sins? Was I there to say how sorry I was for the pain I caused Him, because of my wrong behavior, as His body was tortured and His breath left Him? No! He suffered on my behalf. Then God for-gave me. Once I accepted His complete forgive-ness for myself, I had to ask:

“How could I not forgive others?”

I began to see forgiveness for what it truly was – undeserved pardon. The complete under-standing of what Jesus did for me, led me to understand this concept of forgiveness.

It’s true, I had been hurt. My abuser did not deserve my pardon. But that is why it is called *forgiveness*. When I forgave him, I wasn’t saying that what he did was ok, because it wasn’t. But the resentment and bitterness I harbored began to melt away.

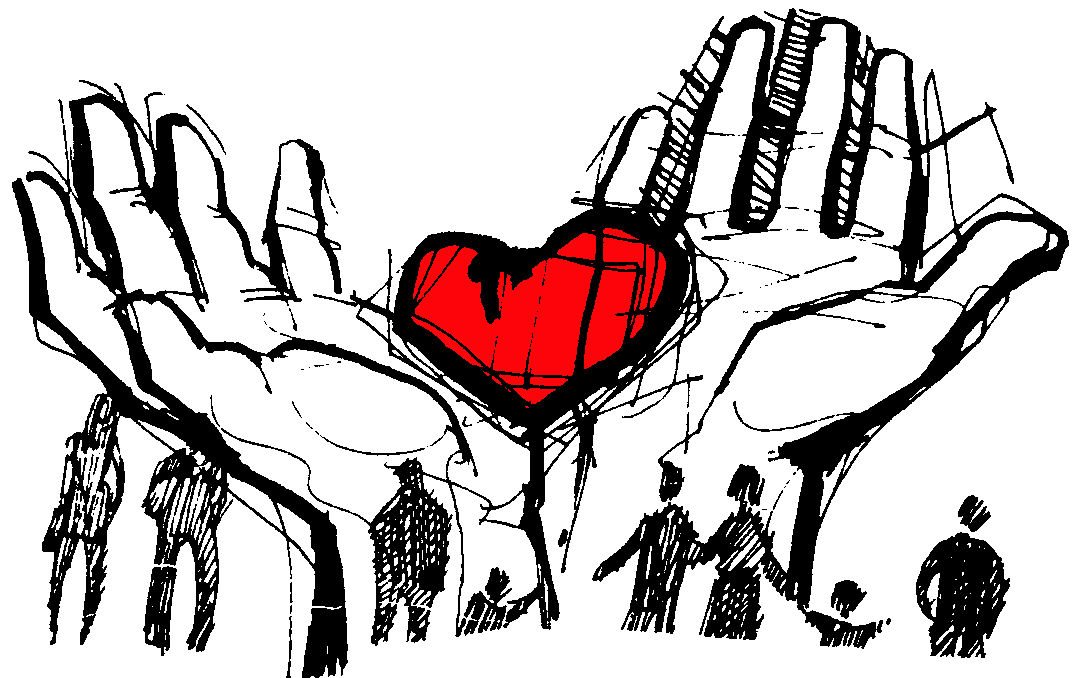
**Arms Open Wide**

I sensed God’s arms open wide, as my hurting heart jumped into His arms to be con-soled and comforted. That day He healed my broken heart!

* My anger vanished as forgiveness towards others broke forth.
* Disappointments faded as hope for the future took hold.
* My sadness dissolved as joy welled up in my heart.
* Peace overtook me.

And, it all began the day I walked into God’s forgiving and unfailing love!

I heard the Lord say, “Tell my people it is time for them to come to me, to seek me. Come to me. Come everyone. Let me hold you, help you. Let me heal your wounds. I will come in great power to restore and bring restoration. There is joy in my heart. Let me impart my joy to you. There is peace in my presence. Come sense my peace.



Love encircles me. Be consumed by my love for you. Rejoice in this day. Yet again, I say rejoice.”



Even though you had a bad start,

God can give you a good finish.

Chapter 3

### Old Feelings

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### ow often we hear and are taught, over and over again, so many great truths from God's Word. But all too often those truths settle in our minds and do not drop down into the depths of our hearts. Or, it may be, we don’t know how to apply them.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

Ephesians 4:31-32 NLT

I had suffered so much pain and bitterness in my heart, because I chose not to forgive. Now that I began choosing to forgive and putting it into practice. I thought I conquered the holding of grudges. But feelings of unforgiveness would again rear its ugly head. I realized I was still not totally released from the clutches and torment of holding on to unforgiveness.

Once again, I found myself full of resent-ment and bitterness. I recalled one offense after another. Complaints and tears flowed easily – too easily! To say the words, “I forgive,” didn't make the feelings go away. I would cry out to God, “Help me forgive.” I'd say the words and think it was done. But later, those old feelings would return. Where was the permanent inner peace I so wanted?

Why was this happening? The action of *continuing* to forgive had not yet become a common response in my heart. I would say the words, “I forgive,” but the tension was still con-trolling my body. The offense was still controlling my mind. As far as I could tell, by the miserable state I was in, it was hurting me more than the one I could not forgive.

Searching the scriptures on ‘forgiveness,’ I found one in the section known as the *Lord's Prayer* that reads: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” Matthew 6:12. In this passage, the word ‘debt’ refers to moral debts or sins.

The answer is to let God deal with that person. Jesus did this too:

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23

Some people want to retaliate when they feel they have been wronged, hurt or offended. For them, forgiving is hard to do. They feel better if they hold a grudge or plan revenge. But you do not have to spend the rest of your days trying to get back at them:

“Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.” Romans 12:19

Dr. Shawne said, “When you hold grudges, your hands aren’t free to catch blessings.” **1**

**Not Approved**

The act of forgiving does not approve the wrong. It, in no way, means what was done was acceptable. Forgiving a person does not con-done the act. It does remove that person’s power over you. As a result, you are no longer defining yourself as that person’s victim.

It may help to remember that God loves the people He made in His own image. On the other hand, God hates sin, abuse, violence and every evil thing. He will not put up with this type of behavior forever, and a time of judgment will come.

Forgiving does not mean a person should go back into a bad situation. Especially, if that situation is a marriage filled with abuse. Rela-tionships and marriages were never meant to be a curse, but a blessing.

A pastor told how he had counseled a woman in an abusive marriage to stay and pray. But the Lord spoke to him and told him to tell the woman to leave. He continued by explaining that He loves His children and does not want any of His little ones to be hurt and treated that way.

Marriage was meant to be a safe haven, a place of refuge, not a place of strife and com-petition. It was not meant to be a place of sadness and heartache. Abuse is rampant, but it is not God’s way.

God told us to love one another; be giving, be generous, be patient. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Forgiving in no way means what was done was alright. It does not mean there isn’t a consequence to be paid. Either the law of the land or God Himself will take care of it. Instead, it takes the offending one from our hands. It removes the weight from our shoulders by transferring it to God.

Jesus gave us two commands: To love God and to love others. He also gave us the ultimate example of what that looked like, when out of love He willingly sacrificed His life for us that we may live. God shows us mercy and grace. Let’s follow His example, and be a representative of His way of love.

**A Blessing**

Jesus said give all your cares to me. That includes all the injustices too. Forgiving is truly a blessing. It releases us from many harmful feelings.

The article, *Tips to Boost Your Emotional Health* states:

“Researchers believe harboring vengeful and painful feelings, places your body under continuous stress. In addition to harming your emotional health, holding on to anger may in-crease your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease.” **2**

An article in *Forgiveness and Health* states:

“Beyond the hurt of the situation itself, harboring negative feelings and thoughts may influence your psychological and even physical health. Research indicates that learning to for-give and move on is a better choice for overall health.” **3**

How we think or feel can affect the health of our bodies. It is a medical fact. Even the Bible agrees:

“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” Proverbs 14:30.

“A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.” [Proverbs 15:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+15:13&version=NIV)

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a cru- shed spirit dries up the bones.” [Proverbs 17:22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+17:22&version=NIV)

Resentment, bitterness or anger hold us captive, if we hold on to unforgiveness. This only compounds our stress. To forgive others is for our own sake. Otherwise a person’s mental, emotional or physical health can be affected ad-versely. A wise God knows what He is talking about, when He tells us to forgive.

**The Ultimate Judge**

Dr. Asa Andrew wrote:

“Our ability to forgive others when they have hurt us is a secret to achieving the optimal health that God has for us. One of the hardest areas of emotional health is forgiveness… Re-search shows us that just one moment of anger will compromise the immune system for up to eight hours…Your health depends on your ability to forgive.” **4**

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be con-demned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Luke 6:37

Think about it. We make ourselves their judge when we do not forgive. But Jesus is the ultimate judge. And He will judge by every deed and every word spoken. A person may sin unknowingly because of deception, or on pur-pose. God will weigh the motives of the heart and will judge righteously.

**Try This**

Get a brick for each care, person or situation that is troubling you. Carry your bricks around with you all day. It will not be long before you become aware of the inconvenience and weight of carrying those bricks. Our disappointments and hurts are like that. They weigh us down and get in our way of doing more profitable activities.

At the end of the day, take those bricks that represent all your hindrances and give them to God. Then get rid of the bricks to show you have left those things in His hands.

Here is something else to try. For each negative thought, replace it with two positive ones. Think about good things and the good times. Through Paul, God's Word tells us to think about these things:

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what-ever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” Philippians 4:8

**The Ducks**

When ducks get wet, the water forms drop-lets and runs right off their backs, without being absorbed by their feathers. If offenses and hurts come your way, imagine them forming droplets and rolling right off your back into the Lord’s hands. This would be much better than letting them penetrate your soul and scar your heart.

**What About You**

There is also the matter of forgiving your-self. Do you keep recalling those things you should have done, but didn’t do? Or, do you keep recalling those things that you did, but you wish you hadn’t done? Are you holding a grudge against yourself?

Forgive yourself too. Realize that as perfect and as good as we desire to be, we are still human. Sometimes we make mistakes or give into weaknesses. Take them to God. Jesus already made the greatest sacrifice for us:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

God will forgive us when we ask Him. He is serious about the forgiveness of sin. Jesus paid a high price because of it. Forgiveness is real and God is serious.

For some of us, it is so easy to become bitter, resentful or angry – forever – when bad things happen to us. If we hold onto those feel-ings, we will never heal, never get over them. We will remain stuck in that moment, unable to move forward.

It is time to have a memorial service. Those things that you would rather not remember, unfortunately did happen and were a part of your life. Acknowledge the disappointment or pain they caused, then put them to rest.

The truth is: At times, life is hard. Jesus even warned us it would be. He did not want us to be caught by surprise.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

**1** *Positive Life with Dr. Shawne.* DrShawne.com

**2** *Tips to Boost Your Emotional Health* from *Just for the Health of It*, a *News Leader* *Publication*, dated Feb 2003.

**3** *Forgiveness and Health* from the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter* dated Dec 2005.

**4** An article by Dr. Asa Andrew from The *Health Prescription Issue 120*, Sept 13, 2006, A Weekly e-House call. [www.drasa.com](http://www.drasa.com)

Chapter 4

### Let God Keep It

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t often seems difficult to leave our cares in God’s hands and not feel like we need to take them back. Yet, dwelling on hurtful memories soon creates a habit. The answer to being able to give situations to God lies in our hearts.

Giving God our problems does not mean blocking them out of our minds. Constantly blocking out negative feelings and thoughts – suppressing them – can lead to physical pro-blems too.

Deal with troubling thoughts and feelings. Do not let them manage you. If they come to mind, acknowledge them. But then, stop those circulating, hurtful thoughts, instead of enter-taining them. Say out loud: “I have forgiven this. God has taken care of it for me.” It is amazing how fast negative thoughts dissipate when you talk back to them.

Sometimes relief may come by not over-thinking so much. Develop a support system of friends. Indulge in some healthy and fun active-ities. Have several personal goals to keep you looking forward. And, of course, be nice to your-self.

God wants to bless you in all areas of your life and give you hope.

The Lord is saying, “Let me bless you. Wait and see the blessings I will bring into your life, the blessings I have for you. I created you, I know your needs. For now, be happy in me. I will take care of you.”

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

**New Memories**

Begin doing things you enjoy. Each day build good memories. Jeremiah said,

“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithful-ness; his mercies begin afresh each morn-ing.” Lamentations 3:22-23 NLT

New memories will soon crowd out those old hurtful ones, until they will have no place in your mind or heart.

Are you thinking, “This won’t work for me; this writer doesn’t know what I have been through?” It is true that I don’t know what you’ve been through. But God does. And, only He can really know.

Even if you try to explain your situation or what you have been through, your listeners may grimace or pity you. But they will not experience the feelings of deep hurt, sadness or disappoint-ment you have.

Of course, it was wrong to be treated that way. It should never have happened. You did not deserve it. God did not plan it for your life. Harboring those memories hurts only you. By now that person may have forgotten what he/she did, twisted the truth about it, lied about it or doesn’t even care.

Think of painful times from your past as illusions that keep you in that hurting state. In reality that particular event or situation no longer exits. It is no longer part of your life—but you are living as if it was. By holding on to it, you are leaving it control your life.

**One Day at a Time**

Take little steps. Take one day at a time. Every morning, ask God for help to be in control, not your past. Ask Him for His best, for His will to be done in your life. Every night, thank Him for helping make you a little stronger. Thank Him for taking you a little closer to the person He wants you to be.

God has provided for our peace. He is will-ing and able to take our pain away. But it is up to us to give the person or situation to Him – it is our choice. Each time those old feelings crop up take them immediately to the Lord. It does not help to water negative memories. Life is not pleasant when it is filled with the weeds of resentment, bitterness and pain. Unforgiveness is not worth the effort it takes.

Let Christ's complete sacrifice and total forgiveness for you run deep into your heart. With it will come a release from the spirit of unforgiveness. The wonderful side effect is an indefinable peace that comes with forgiving.

“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 one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. 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

We do not like to see someone we love hurting physically or emotionally. God is the same way. Let the healing power of God mend your hurts. He is able. “He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds” Ps 147:3.

He is our deliverer. He is our healer. I am so glad God is in the healing business, aren't you? He is the healer, not only of our bodies, but also of our minds and our emotions. Peace is ours, when we give everything over to Him.

**The Blame Game**

Surprisingly,some people whine, cry, and shake their fists at God, when things don’t go like they think they should. Some people blame God for things that happen that are upsetting. But do they take time to thank Him or even notice all the times He intervenes or His angels intervene on their behalf? And it probably happens more often than they are aware of.

I heard a commentator ask this question concerning an accident victim, “Why do you think God took his life.” In reality, this person lost his life because of a decision another person made to drive while he was drunk. It was that person who took his life, not God.

We have been given free will to make our own choices. Sometimes they are not good choices. Sometimes satan has his hand in those things that come against us. Sometimes another person’s decision affects us. Sometimes life just happens.

“Tell my people it is time. It is time to come to me. They put off seeking me, yet I am their answer. When will they learn? When will they understand how much I want to do for them? When will they understand how much I love them?

I have given them everything through my Son — forgiveness, redemption, a new life; yet they cry and whine, and shake their fist at me. How long will they turn their backs to me or blame me for all their troubles, when all I desire is to give them every good thing and withhold not my love from them.”

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting sha-dows.” James 1:17

God’s plan for you is this: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” Jeremiah 29:11. Do not run from the One who truly can help you, who can strengthen you and give you hope for the future.

“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Isaiah 26:3



When there is no way out,

Let God in.

Chapter 5

### Another Perspective

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ow should we react to offenses and in-justices? In one way or the other, we have to deal with feelings that result from hurt, offence or other injustices.

I heard a person relate many stories from his life. They were about the times he saw or felt that he or someone close to him was being hurt, taken advantage of, or treated in a demeaning way. I kept waiting for the happy and encour-aging endings – but they never came.

His summary, as I understood it, was that even though he wanted immediate justice, his satisfaction had to come from knowing justice would come during the great white throne judgment.

To those of you who may feel the same way, here is an alternative to the ending of his stories and yours. Consider forgiving and asking God to intervene in the offending person’s life. He did tell us to pray for our enemies. Pray that God would reveal Himself, to bring change in him/her through His love.

**Benefits**

There is also a variety of benefits to be gained from some of our negative experiences. Just as weights are resistance to build stronger muscles, these experiences are the resistance to build spiritual character.



“Wealso glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Romans 5:3-4

The Bible tells us that Jesus also learned by the things He suffered. We can learn patience, faithfulness and forgiveness. We learn to pray for our enemies. And, we experience com-passion towards others who are going through similar situations.

One time, I asked the Lord why negative experiences kept coming my way. I asked Him to show me if it was something, I was doing wrong.

He reminded me that He had “been betray-ed, lied about, lied to, beaten, experienced loss, was unappreciated and not believed.” Then He said, “Now you are just like me.” Are you just like Jesus?

“So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy a-head, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold.

So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.” 1 Peter 1:6-7 NLT

**God’s Forgiveness**

How does God forgive? First, He places our sins under the sacrifice and blood of His Son, Jesus. Then He says He “remembers our sins no more.” We are told they are as far removed as “the east is from the west.” This is how God treats the sins of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Do you say, but it is impossible for us to forget? I agree. We may not be able to erase the memories as God does, but as we release these people or situations to God; our negative feel-ings will begin to melt away.

God wants us to lay down everything that has hurt us. The way to deal with hurt is to practice mercy and grace, shown by forgiving. We cannot have mercy for ourselves and justice for others. Choose to forgive and walk in free-dom.

Once we forgive, we will not feel a need to keep bringing the offense up, to keep rehashing it, to keep thinking about it and anguishing over it. The memories will not keep coming back to haunt us at the pace they once did. And best of all, we will be released from the misery and pain those memories once brought with them. As a result, we can move on into our future. We can say with Paul:

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is be-hind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14



Chapter 6

### Pieces to a Puzzle

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writer said, “There are many wounded and hurting people around the world: from re-jection, alcohol, drugs, abuse, broken dreams, money, lust….” In conclusion he ended with: “Partner with Christ in His amazing plan of re-deeming humankind and giving them the bene-fits of Calvary.”

If this is the answer, “Why then is the church full of wounded, hurting people still suffering from all of the above and more?”

**A Finished Work**

At the end of His life, Jesus said His work was finished. He freed us from sin, sickness, curses, the evil one and death (life apart from God). He sent the Holy Spirit as an added gift; Who not only helps us to be free from the grip of sin, but leads us into a better way of living. Peace is one of the results of having the Holy Spirit living in us.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithful-ness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23

**Why the Struggle**

Why then, do some of us still struggle? What was I missing? It seemed like I had all the pieces to the puzzle, but they were not fitting together.

I questioned the Lord. Here is His answer. Contemplate His words: “Bring forth joy. Bring forth strength. Bring forth all that I am, for I am in you and you are in me. I love you and you love me. We are one. Hear me. Hear what I say. Act upon those words. I will be with you.”

Notice the action words:

* Bring forth
* You are / we are (a state of being)
* Love (leads to action)
* Hear
* Act

“Bring forth all that I am.” That is a loaded statement. He is: joy, strength, love, righteous, faithful and much more. For example: If He is joy and He is in us and we are one, then we should be able to bring forth joy. His Spirit and DNA now flowing in us and through us, causes our mindset and actions to become more like His.

The Holy Spirit was given to us and lives in us, after we accepted Jesus as our Savior: “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us,” Romans 5:5.

John tells us:

“This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.” 1 John 4:13-16

**One with God**

We begin to:

* Take on His nature.
* Manifest His character.
* Unite with Him in purpose.

Do our old ways of acting and thinking still exist? They may, because we are still confined in this earthly body. But now we have the ability to rise above our ways that are contrary to God’s – to see from a new and different perspective. It is not so much our struggling that is the issue, but our choice to allow God to shine through us.

Today, children play with toys called trans-formers. These toys have the ability to turn from one object into another, as they are twisted and turned. We are twisted and turned by God’s love, the teaching of His Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts cry needs to be, “Change me, oh Lord, to be more like you.”

Then, just be – joy, strength, love, righteous and faithful.



Change is not an enemy.

It is the Christian walk.

Chapter 7

### Come Closer

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heard someone say that he had a relationship with God for many years. Yet he did not understand why he should pray, when he had to wait for the people who committed offenses against him to receive their judgment, or he did not receive an immediate response.

This concerned me. In fact, it was scary to me since he was speaking from the pulpit. I wondered how many others may have this same question. First, realize that studying the Bible or having a position in the church does not mean a relationship with God is established.

For example: I saw a speaker. I know what he looks like. I know his name. I could say I know who he is, but do I have a relationship with him? – No.

He knows nothing about me and even if he were told about me, we still would not have a relationship. Why? Because we never spent any time together. We have not corresponded. We have not talked. We do not know each other on a personal level.

**Developing a Relationship**

Relationships are developed by talking with one another and getting to know what the other person is all about. This takes spending time with them.

A relationship with God is developed in the same way. We can get to know who He is by reading about Him or hearing about Him. But there is no relation-ship established unless we spend time with Him.

It is so fulfilling and satisfying to have a relationship with the Lord; the desire to keep searching for something more no longer exists.

I also heard of some people who discourage others from having a relationship with God, by saying it is a false teaching. Personally, I never considered it to be a teaching. When I talk with God about my happy times, my sad times, my past, my future, my family, my friends, life in general – it never occurred to me that I did not have a relationship with Him.

Don’t the terms *children, husband,* *father, friends,* all indicate a relationship? These are terms God uses over and over in scripture to describe His relationship with us. The ability to have a relationship with Him is what separates Christianity from other religions.

We do not have a dead god or one that is far away and uninvolved. We have a living God who wants to be a part of our lives. He desires it. It is possible.



Millions of people are finding this closeness.

When we love someone, we want to be close to them. Isn’t that natural? It is no different with God. “Come near to God and he will come near to you” James 4:8. Job said, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you,” Job 42:5.

**Prayer is Two-way**

Prayer is more than asking for things or asking for His intervention. Prayer is two-way. Yet, how many people take the time to listen. Prayer is revealing your heart to God and wait-ing for Him to reveal His heart to you.

Do you listen for the whisper of His voice? He speaks to us through, as some call it, that still small voice speaking in our hearts. He also speaks to us through His Word in the Bible, through another person, or through a sermon.

Having a relationship with the Lord is to know you can go to Him with a question, with a situation you need help in, with requests for others, and know you will receive an answer. It is when you go to Him:

* feeling lonely and feel His love surround you.
* with your tears and feel His comfort.
* feeling weak and come away feeling strong.
* feeling confused and come away with direction.

It is going to Him with praise and thankful-ness for all He is and all He has done. This leads us to the peace in His presence.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

**No Agenda**

Have you considered praying without ask-ing for a thing? Have you gone to Him in prayer:

* just because you want to be in His presence?
* just because you love Him?
* just because you want to feel close to Him?

Some time ago, God spoke these words to my heart. They seem to fit in with this context. He said:

“Some come to me because they need me. They feel desperate. They don’t know who else to turn to. When no one else will meet their needs, they turn to me. This is ‘The Kiss of Need’.

Some people never kiss me. They never come to me. They feel they have no need of me. They do not love me. I am of no significance in their lives. This is ‘No Kisses’.

There are those who come to me just because they love me. They enjoy being in my presence. Oh, they know I can meet their needs but that is not the only time they come to me. These people want to be close to me all the time. This is ‘The Kiss of Love’.”

What kind of kisses do you give?

Chapter 8

### Stay a While

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he waves of life carry us here and there. They may carry us out into the glassy, calm sea. They may rise and fall and throw us around. They may slap us against a rock or send us tumbling across the sand. They may lick our ankles or glide us on the surf to shore. Who knows where the waves of life may take us?



In the midst of tumbling, the Lord waits for us to come to Him. We tend to fret over every little thing that happens in our lives. Yet God knows our needs. He knows your needs. He will take care of you. Let Him fulfill your desires. Lean on Him. Believe in Him. Trust in Him. He longs to show you all that He is.

He will never withdraw His love. He is not blind that He cannot see or dumb that He cannot hear all that goes on in the lives of those He loves. Go to Him and be at peace. He draws us with His love. A love that is never ending and never burdensome. Experience His glory and His joy.

The Lord is saying, “Don’t fret over the little things. The big things in your sight are little to me. Change sadness, disappointment, even an-ger into happiness. Sing and dance, for I am with you. My love for you is complete.”

We have “Jesus”; His name is above every name. He is our High Priest, the One who cares for us.

“Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:34

Heartaches come and go, but He is always by our side. Don’t sink in despair, instead lift your head up and look to Him. Let Him be your focus. His love is forever. In His presence is joy forever more.

**Stay a While**

Even though life is short we will have Him for eternity, so rejoice in that. Go to His secret place and stay a while. The Lord is calling to us:

“Come sit with me. Spend your time by my side. Come, come away with me into the Holy of Holies and know the love I have for you. Peace will flow from me into your heart. Troubles will fade away. Why stress over something tempor-ary. There are still blessings up ahead. They do not stop. Life does not stop. Move forward with me.”

In our busyness we are often too quick to leave. Rest in Him. He is a safe haven for us.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

**A New Day**

It is a good time to stop giving a hurtful past authority over your life, to control and influence your future. Determine it is over and start a new life; one that no longer lets your past influence today or your tomorrows.

We can press forward through the challen-ges with God by our side. He can give us a good finish, even if we had a bad start.

“Oh, my people, I long for you. When will you see me as a father who loves you and wants to care for you? Let this be a new day. Come and rejoice in me. Let me cover you with my love. Let me saturate you with my kisses. Let my blessings overflow. Come, partake of all I offer you. Yes, it is a new day.

Come and walk with me. Not behind me, not ahead of me, but beside me. Do not waver, hold my hand; I will be your strength. Let me pour out my healing balm; absorb it. Let it reach into the deep, hurting places. It’s a new day. Come and rejoice in me. Now is the time. Don’t hold back. Come with me into this new day and see that I am God.”

It is time to be free from the hurts of the past. If those nasty memories try to sneak up, but they no longer bring the pain with them, then you know you are free.

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Peace at last!



**About the Author**

Nancy L. Harry’s mission is three-fold:

* to carry the message of God's love and the impact it has on our daily lives.
* to prepare us for Christ’s return.
* to offer helpful suggestions as we make our way through difficult times.

She encourages others with Scripture and experiences from her own Christian walk, as they continue in their walk with the Lord.

Her heart’s desire is to see healing—physi-cally, emotionally and spiritually—manifested in the body of Christ.

Her prayer is for everyone to be rooted in love, and have the power to understand and know Christ’s deep love.

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