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The Transformational Effects of Forgiveness in the Lives of Members of the Kingsboro Temple Congregation

Joseph E. Ainsworth

Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE LIVES OF MEMBERS OF THE KINGSBORO TEMPLE CONGREGATION

by

Ainsworth E. Joseph

Adviser: Curtis Fox
Abstract of Graduate Student Research

Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE LIVES OF MEMBERS OF THE KINGSBORO TEMPLE CONGREGATION

Name of researcher: Ainsworth E. Joseph

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Curtis Fox, PhD

Date Completed: November 2010

Problem

Forgiveness is a crucial need within the congregation, and the lack of a greater practice of forgiveness is severely impacting the emotional, relational, and spiritual well-being of members. This present study investigated causes of hurt within the congregation, and designed a process to assist members in achieving forgiveness to empower them to live a forgiven life.

Method

The Pearson Correlations of Values measured 17 variables of spirituality and forgiveness against variables of avoidance, revenge, distancing, and feeling close. The
17 variables were reviewed and validated by Dr. Joan Atwood as a check and balance to personal biases. Forty-eight members were studied, comprised of 15 males, 29 females, and 4 unidentified by gender. A focus group facilitated a more in-depth study in forgiveness through a workshop and personalized work. Twenty-two members of the congregation workshop were studied, comprised of 4 males and 18 females. The workshop involved cognitive, narrative, and affirmative techniques in a process of achieving forgiveness.

Results

The correlation matrix showed a number of interesting findings. Some of the correlations were negative relationships. A few were statistically significant: spiritual belief was related to avoidance talk, revenge, distancing, and feeling close ($r = .016, .027, .031, .039, .041, .057, .071, .078, .085 & .093$). These correlations imply that positive belief might inspire more healthy feelings and behavior of closeness for offender, while negative belief, unhealthy behaviors of avoidance talk, revenge, and distancing self from offender. Regarding spiritual attitude ($r = .000, .010, .031, .048, .052, .061, .063, .093 & .001$). These correlations imply that the church’s demonstration of understanding and support might inspire feeling of closeness in the offended towards the offender, and community of faith, while lack of understanding and support avoidance talk, revenge, and distancing self from the offender and church community. See table 2 on pages 106-107 for details. There was no evidence to substantiate that the spiritual discipline of forgiveness is easier when practiced in the spiritual community.Apparently humans have similar emotional ways they respond to offenses until empowered to respond differently. Individuals from the focus group and personalized processes of forgiveness
used a Likert-type scale to rate benefits. Whereas 65% found the workshop to be very helpful, 35% found it helpful. While 69% felt they had achieved their goal, 10% felt they were still struggling, and 23% felt they were more advanced in the approach.

Conclusions

It appears that the personal belief of an offended member and the attitude of the church community towards the offended and the offense affect the process and outcome of forgiveness. Christians seem to struggle with the virtue of forgiveness as any other people groups.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS IN THE LIVES OF MEMBERS OF THE KINGSBORO TEMPLE CONGREGATION

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by
Ainsworth E. Joseph

November 2010
THE TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF FORGIVENESS
IN THE LIVES OF MEMBERS OF A
CHURCH CONGREGATION

A project dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Ainsworth E. Joseph

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser,
Curtis Fox

Director, DMin Program
Skip Bell

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Denis Fortin

Date approved
DECEMBER 10, 2010

David Penno
DEDICATION

TO MY WIFE AND THREE DAUGHTERS WHO WERE QUITE UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTIVE OF THIS TEDIOUS AND TIME CONSUMING PROJECT

Gillian S. Joseph
Kohren C. Joseph
Kohrissa C. Joseph
Kohriese C. Joseph

Inspired by their desire to celebrate the completion of this project, and the moral support shown by accompanying me to two of the three modules— I have made it to the finish line. Moreover, the virtue of forgiveness has been exemplified in our familial relationship. There were times that I broke plans and promises when “under the gun” to complete assignments associated with this project. They were patient, forgiving, and supportive. They believed in me and were my cheerleaders as I played the ball toward the hoop on the academic court.

TO UNIEL AND ALEXANDRINA JOSEPH

My Deceased Parents

The spiritual nurturing and godly example they provided laid the foundation for my spiritual life and ministry. Though they did not live to see this day, like the patriarchs, they were able to see it afar through the eyes of faith, and embraced it. My mother envisioned this work and conferred in her own way a doctorate on me, two months before her brief illness and passing. They will always be remembered.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Hess Instrument</td>
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<td>MC</td>
<td>McCullough Instruments</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>New King James Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>Symbol for Pearson Correlation Coefficient</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
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<td>JA</td>
<td>Joseph Ainsworth Variables on Spirituality</td>
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The eschatological prophecy of the coming of Elijah presents a call and a warning regarding reconciliation. That there would be estrangement in familial relationships in the last days is indicative that the virtue of forgiveness would be lacking. The turning of the hearts of fathers to children and children to fathers unequivocally involves forgiveness (Mal 4:5, 6). This project echoes Elijah’s call and warning to God’s remnant church in particular, and to people of every walk of life. There are three elements that are woven throughout this work, like a strand of thread in a piece of fabric. These elements are: (1) the focal point. (2) reciprocity, and (3) health and well-being pertaining to forgiveness. In addition, three concepts, each standing like a link in a golden chain, will emerge out of this work. They are: (1) the cognitive. (2) the narrative, and (3) the affirmative approaches to facilitating forgiveness seekers. Following is a synopsis of each of these elements, and concepts.

First, the focal point of forgiveness is Christ and the cross of Calvary where the ultimate transaction took place. Humanity must, therefore, look for clues of divine forgiveness to pattern their forgiveness after: What God said. What God did. Forgiveness must begin, continue, and end with God. The ultimate expression of the divine character is found in Jesus the Incarnate Word of God made flesh (John 1:1, 14). In these last days, Jesus is declared the ultimate expression of God’s mind (Heb 1:1, 2).
Second, there is a reciprocal nature about forgiveness—you give it and you get it back. The motive in giving, however, should not primarily be to get it back. The irony is that with what measure you use it, it will be measured back to you (Matt 7:2). One can only justifiably expect to receive interest and returns on money deposited into a bank account. Giving forgiveness can be considered as a bank deposit that yields good returns in the long run. Rightly understood, forgiveness must become a way of life for the Christian.

Humankind is a composite of varied facets—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual elements—that work together to make them whole beings. Forgiveness may at first begin as a social disruption in a relationship. If the social interference goes unchecked, it could spiral downwards through the mental to the emotional, physical, and ultimately, spiritual. In brief, forgiveness affects every aspect of one's being. Therefore, well-being to a large degree hinges on forgiveness. It is the passion to see whole human beings leading wholesome lives that drives this study. Much study on illness shows that some 90 percent of physical illnesses are triggered by negative mental and emotional states.

The three concepts of forgiveness emerging from the study are based on the biblical text and examples of Jesus. The first concept, the cognitive approach, has to do with a sweeping kind of survey to ascertain all the nuances surrounding the offence. Often when people are hurt, there is an obsessive, and obviously, unhealthy focus on self. There are so many kinds of voices in the world and none of them are without significance (1 Cor 14:10). In the context of this study, listening to other voices generates understanding that may clarify perspectives and change the meaning of the offense.
The second concept, the narrative approach, relates to the use of stories to facilitate the offended in re-writing the story of his or her life. It empowers the offended person to aspire to reach a definition of his or her own life following an offense. A definition that is different from that which may have been attached to them by way of the offense. It facilitates the offended to view one's self as a whole and normal person, who notwithstanding the offensive experience, can emerge as a winner rather than a loser—a victor rather than a victim.

The third concept, the affirmative approach, simply involves coaching, or mentoring the offended along their journey of achieving forgiveness. It requires vested confidence in the ability of the offended person to achieve their goal. It means believing in, and giving them reason to hope again. "It is the privilege of those who give pastoral care to see indirectly the very glory of the moral goodness of God in the faces and lives of those for whom we are moral advocates."\(^1\) The intent of this work is to ennoble, enable, and enhance fellow pastors in being more effective in helping their members achieve and live forgiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One wise person said, “The bend of the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the curve.”^2 There were those moments when the bend of this academic journey seemed long and impossible to walk. Making the curve often was daunting; however, I am profoundly grateful to the many individuals who played invaluable roles in helping me navigate the curve. First, I give all glory, laud, and honor to God who is the reservoir from which I constantly drew wisdom. I held Him to His promise, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas 1:5 NKJV).

Special thanks to my doctoral adviser Dr. Curtis Fox, who stretched me to the maximum. The insights gained through his comments, questions, and suggestions enabled me to see the bigger picture on the issue being discussed. Take for example Chapter 2. It was originally 26 pages, but turned out to be double that because of the critical thinking and depth of analysis inspired by Dr. Fox’s probing questions and comments. I felt a sense of accomplishment when he wrote at the end of the chapter, “Good reading very engaging.” To him I owe a debt of gratitude for helping to synthesize this project.

To Dr. Clifford Jones who functioned as second reader, I am grateful for the push to delve deeper into systematic theology. His wisdom and experience in writing

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^2 Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 96.
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CHAPTER 1

OUTLINING THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The content of this research calls for church members to align belief and behavior in forgiveness. What Christians believe is not always what they do. The theory regarding Christian principles may be articulately expressed by members of the Christian community, however, there appears to be powerlessness when it comes to living the very articulated principles of Christianity. A careful reflection on the practice of forgiveness, which is an essential Christian principle, and virtue, gave rise to great concern. This concern focuses on the implications of destiny in this life, and the life hereafter, based upon how members live and forgive individually and corporately.

The reality of the hour of judgment, the uncertainty of life, and the imminence of the second advent of Jesus, should awaken among church members the urgency of being forgiven, forgiving, and living a forgiven life. For too long, the church has acted like the proverbial Ostrich by “burying its head in the ground” and acting like everything is fine amongst the membership. The rendering of sacrificial service and means may be highly esteemed, but cannot suffice as compensatory gestures to forgiveness. The “weightier matter” of forgiveness, left undone over time, became a crushing burden for spiritual leadership to bear. The call is for each member to bear their share of the burden of forgiveness. This unequivocally will lighten the load that has been thrust upon spiritual
leadership. It will further result in a healthier functioning community of believers. Moreover, it will have a positive impact upon the destiny of the church membership individually and corporately.

Current Situation

In January 2005, I was assigned as Senior Pastor to the Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists in Northeastern Conference (NEC), New York. The church is a dynamic and youthful congregation with a book membership of 900-1000. It is primarily comprised of second generation Caribbean-Americans. Some 80% are females between thirty and forty years of age. About 70% are singles either through divorce, separation, or never having been married. Another 35% are youth and young adults between fifteen and twenty-one years of age. An estimated 15% hold graduate and terminal degrees with others at basic education of college level. The above are based on actual data from a study the church conducted in May 2007.

Statement of Ministry Challenge

There is a significant degree of tension in the member-to-member relationships within the congregation. The church is divided by factions. This results in members supporting and boycotting programs depending on who is leading, or who generated the idea or program. The polarization of the church is manifested at the church board level through political voting. An idea or program may be clearly presented that supports the vision and mission of the church; however, this could be voted down because of the one who generated, presented, or will be charged with the implementation. As a result, the mission of the church is often impeded. There is a facade of unity and togetherness;
however, many members are really estranged from each other. In many cases, levels of anger, suspicion, and resentment are manifested in verbal and physical altercations. This state of affairs requires a considerable amount of pastoral time devoted to mediating understanding and forgiveness.

Statement of Purpose

The task of this project is to explore forgiveness and gain deeper insight and understanding, with a goal of teaching this virtue as an attitude and skill that can bring about a transformation in personal and relational health and well-being of the church membership.

Theological Implications

The concept of forgiveness is an important Christian virtue. Jesus admonishes people to forgive because one day they will need it themselves. Forgiveness from God will be measured by a person's own standard of forgiveness meted out to others (Matt 6:12, 14-15). Forgiveness can heal relationships and enhance the emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of an offended person, as well as their transgressor. The undergirding belief of this study is that forgiveness provides primary benefits for the offended and secondary benefits for the offender. These benefits may be realized when the offended willingly chooses forgiveness as his or her own work and responsibility.

The ability to "free the heart from bitterness, resentment, and vendetta is the essence of forgiveness."³

Ministry Situation and Context

The church is located in an upper-class community made up predominantly of Caucasian and Jewish people who represent approximately 95% of the population. Current trends show mixed couples immigrating into the community and slowly changing its demography. The church has been operating in the community for the past fifteen of its nineteen-year history. There is a commuter-type membership that is attracted from four states to a packed program of church-related activities. The church is debt free and has a separate facility for administrative offices and counseling.

There was an associate pastor paid by the church for three years until July 2005. Since that time, the church has been operating with one pastor. A female assistant pastor was assigned as of February 1, 2007, and a new dynamic to ministry was created for two reasons: (1) there was euphoria, especially among women who comprised 80% of the church, and (2) a novelty of having the first female pastor in the northeast drew national and international attention on the church via the media ministry. Prior to this assignment, in recognition of the growing need for pastoral assistance, in April 2006, a part-time administrative assistant was hired by the church to assist the pastor with some of the administrative responsibilities.

Research Methodology

Literature was reviewed to examine research dealing with hurt, anger, and conflict experienced personally or relationally. The review included current books and articles related to forgiveness issues. Forgiveness was examined at three levels: (1) extending forgiveness, (2) receiving forgiveness, and (3) living a forgiven life. Church members struggling with any of these aspects of forgiveness were invited to join the study. There
were eighty-seven members who voluntarily signed up to participate in the study. Participating members completed a forgiveness questionnaire. The completed questionnaire was returned in a self-addressed postage paid envelope. The administrative assistant enrolled the participants and distributed the research instrument. The research instrument contained seventy-six variables designed to measure communication of forgiveness, transgression strategies, relationship distance index, and spirituality and forgiveness. The variables were measured by Pearson correlation with a two-tailed test.

A focus group comprising twenty-two single parents of the church agreed to a workshop on forgiveness. Each participating parent had peculiar experiences that resulted in personal and relational hurt. Struggling with forgiving, some for many years, they embraced the opportunity to experience the forgiveness virtue. At the end of the workshop, each participant rated benefits derived and where they were in forgiveness using a Likert-type scale. Participants were offered the opportunity of receiving individualized work following the same workshop. Eleven percent of individuals signed up and processed forgiveness at their own pace. Seven individuals completed the process and reported effectiveness and personal benefits derived through letters of commendations.

The Intervention

Forgiveness seminars and workshops were created and presented to educate, empower, and transform the lives of offended persons. This was done by highlighting the effects of forgiving and having an unforgiving attitude. Alternatives to nurturing hurt and resentments were generated through case studies. Some of the offenses the study unpacked were: abuse (power, sexual, physical, verbal, and mental), betrayal, divorce and
separation, neglect, abandonment, deception, slander, gossip, libel, wrongful accusation, and judgment.

Change Procedure

The seminar and workshop sessions provided a free, safe, and confidential environment where individuals could vent their hurts and anger. Following a presentation on forgiveness, participants gathered into small groups for discussion and role-play responding to different vignettes. The processes were designed to stimulate participants' cognitive thinking skills regarding their life in the past, present, and future. Upon developing a full picture of their life, they were facilitated in re-writing the story of their life, leaving out undesired parts. Through this narrative technique, participants envisioned new possibilities, and designed preferred outcomes for life, despite the interruption by the transgression. Through coaching by the facilitator, feedback, and feed-forward by peers, each participant was affirmed for inclination, and small steps taken towards forgiveness. The undergirding perspective of the change and procedure is that it is realized one step at a time, and one phase at a time. At the end of the study, the general membership or any subset of the church will have the opportunity to participate in the same program, but not for the purpose of this study.

Goals and Objectives

Church members or individuals will be able to discuss dealing with hurt, anger, and conflict that they may have experienced personally or relationally. The primary objective is to bring about personal healing in the lives of offended members. They, in
turn, will become "healed helpers" 4 of others within the congregation who desire to move toward healing and forgiveness in their own lives. A secondary goal of this project is to develop a care-facing group that will assist pastors in helping members of their congregation process emotional healing and forgiveness in their individual lives.

Evaluation of the Outcomes

Outcomes were evaluated in three ways. First, I mapped the offended participants' feelings, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors towards the offense, and the offender between each session. I determined effectiveness based on a decrease in malevolent thoughts, desires, and behaviors; and an increase in benevolent thoughts, desires, and behaviors towards the offender. Second, I used a simple Likert-type scale by which the offended participants rated the benefits derived, and where they believed they were in forgiveness at the end of the process. Participants rated themselves as being either unforgiving, somewhat forgiving, forgiving, or very forgiving. Benefit derived from the forgiveness process was rated by each participant to be either very helpful, helpful, somewhat helpful, not helpful, or uncertain.

Third, I did observational analysis that focused on reconciliatory gestures, relating to distance, closeness, and communication patterns. I looked at interaction patterns between the offended and the offender, such as eye contact when speaking; whether or not they spoke directly or indirectly, or whether there was hostility manifested through intonation and choice of words. I observed how they sat in the same setting, whether back-to-back, opposite, or away from each other. I looked for reactions to general

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comments made by each other, such as smiles, laughter, frowns, and comments on the other's statements.

**Definition of Terms**

The terms outlined below may appear either throughout this project, or they may serve as working definitions in the manner in which they are used and understood purposefully and contextually as applicable to this study.

_Baby and bath water:_ The act of throwing away the good thing with the unwanted thing, and making no distinction between the two.

_Being heuristic:_ The art of educating through exploratory problem solving technique for learning that facilitates discovery through the methods of trial-and-error.

_Bipolar:_ Alternating periods of emotional reactivity triggered by some imbalance.

_Born-again:_ An individual who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and confessed the same through baptism by immersion.

_Buddhist:_ One who believes in Buddhism, a philosophical religion that deals extensively with problems in metaphysic, phenomenology, ethics, and epistemology.

_Care-giving:_ Assuming or having been assigned the responsibility for dependent minor(s), or adult(s).

_Church:_ Used with specific reference to the Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists and with general reference to the entire Christian faith.

_Clear-cut:_ Being in view or grasp of an opportunity for action that will produce desired results.
Counter-transferring: A psychoanalytical theory of unconsciously responding to a person being helped during which the helper's emotional responses are reminiscent of feelings of a similar past experience.

Cosmological: The theological beliefs regarding the existence of the finite world—the cosmos.

Danger zone: The experience of being in a situation that can produce harm to self and others in relationship.

Divine nature: The state of being that can only be ascribed to God.

Domino stick: The individual who is the key player in the process by virtue of the options they have, and the decision they must make, that determines another's fate.

Dysfunctional: Abnormality or impairment manifested in behavior responses to situations of life.

Ecclesiology: The doctrine and study of the church called out and set apart by God, for his service.

Entering wedge: Anything that provides a break-through into a closed system.

Epistemological: A scientific study of knowledge and justification for held beliefs.

Eschatology: The doctrine and study of end-time events generally related to prophetic fulfillment.

Exomologesis: An un-scriptural notion held by the medieval churches that a sinner has to struggle through great bewildering odds to achieve forgiveness.

Extremism: The danger of going to the utmost point on a continuum, leaving no thought or consideration for any other balancing perspective.
First-order change: A temporary change in a member motivated perhaps out of fear of repercussion or respect for authority—such that the fear is eradicated or allayed, until the authority figure becomes absent, in which case the offended member resorts to their old behavior.

Fanaticism: Excessive enthusiasm about a religious opinion results in a religious frenzy which gives rise to chaos and disunity in a church organization.

Fly-wheel: In reference to a motorized vehicle, it is that part which creates the first motion in the steps towards achieving forgiveness.

Functional group: Having all members of its system understand the function or interpersonal benefits of working in collaboration to achieve the same results.

God's agents: Any being acting in concert or on behalf of God.

Gridlock: The experience of being trapped between opposing forces from all directions.

Guilt: Feelings of culpability, having committed an offence consciously, or for imagined offences, or from a sense of inadequacy in meeting expectations in a relationship.

Horizontal axis: The extension of the cross, upon which the arms of Jesus were fastened.

Homeostasis: The dynamic actions of a system whereby it achieves and maintains a state of balance.

Hinduism: An eastern religion based on an Aryan race-native to Hindustan.

Islamism: The religion of Mohammedanism and the whole body of those who profess it.
Infirmitiy: The state or quality of being; having an unsound mind and or body resulting in weakness and failing.

Justification by faith: The Christian who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, being instantaneously declared righteous, upon the merits of Christ’s righteousness, having obtained sinners redemption, through the shedding of his own blood on the cross.

Judeo-Christian: Beliefs and practices that harmonize with Jewish and Christian doctrinal and philosophical thought.

Karma: The force generated by a person’s actions believed in Hinduism and Buddhism to perpetuate transmigration, and in its ethical consequences to determine the nature of the person’s next existence.

Kerygmatic: The science of theology, that reasons from revelation to facts of the world, unlike natural theology that reasons from the facts of the world to God. It stresses the use of sacred doctrine in preaching, contrasted with a more academic approach.

Kingsboro Temple: A congregation constituted within the sisterhood of churches of the Northeastern Conference and located in the Park Slope community of the Borough of Brooklyn, New York.

Leadership insularity: An inability to be reached emotionally; not being transparent and vulnerable; maintaining a hard and distinct boundary line between leader and follower.

Leadership/Therapists: Used interchangeably in reference to those taking the lead to empower others in the therapeutic processes of achieving forgiveness.

Malevolent: Desiring ill-will or harboring personal hatred for one who wronged another.
Mental models: Word pictures and images about how the world works and one's role in it.

Mediated process: The involvement of a third party sitting with an offender and offended to process forgiveness.

Mirroring techniques: Using communication feedback skills, such as reflective response, clarification, and validation of what has been heard.

Microcosm: The subsystem of the Kingsboro Temple comprising the family with its various entities: individual, couple, and siblings in their familial relations.

Macrocosm: The Kingsboro Temple congregants comprising of the many individuals and family units coming together for weekly services; and interacting daily through technology.

Neurotic: Relating to the nerves; being susceptible or liable to nervous disease.

Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: The largest of nine regional conferences within the North American Division of the World Church spanning geographic territory of: New York, Connecticut, Rode Island, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Omnipotence: An attribute of God pertaining to His almighty power.

Omniscience: An attribute of God pertaining to His perfect wisdom.

Ontological: The theological belief regarding the perfect God who created, controls, and is of necessity in the cosmic operation.

Perfectionism: The frustrated acts of individuals to achieve perfection on their own merits.
Paracletic: Refers to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, called alongside humanity, the Holy Spirit makes the work of Christ for humankind effective in and through them.

Postmodern currents: The contemporary notion of multiple views of reality that challenges pure objectivity and highlights personal experience.

Psychotic: A pathological state of being manifested in abnormal behavior.

Promised Land: Analogous to the Children of Israel entering Canaan; it refers to that promised place of peace and happiness in human relations.

Purity of the Church: Refers to an adherence to strict standards of behavior delineated by the Bible or religious organization that impacts identity.

Rainbow of hope: The evidence that there is going to be a brighter tomorrow; the prospect of the future engenders renewal and commitment.

Re-incarnation: Hinduism’s belief in some life form after this life.

Roller coaster ride: The emotional turmoil one experiences following a transgression against their person or property.

Rule of odds: When something goes contrary to norm or expectation.

Second-order change: That which results in permanent change in interactive patterns between members of the church congregation.

Self-fulfilling prophecy: Deeply held beliefs and expectations that translate into reality in one’s experiences of life.

Short-circuit: Skipping important steps in reaching a goal, thus distorting or skewing the results.
**Sharia Law:** Sharia comes from an Arabic word meaning “way.” It defines Islamic views on way of life including inflicting punitive acts upon individuals committing crimes that range from torture and loss of limbs and body organs to death.

**Soteriology:** The doctrine and study of salvation effected through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

**Status quo:** Maintaining the balance between former life experiences by protecting the boundaries in ways that are resistant to change.

**Subliminal message:** Penetrating the consciousness of humanity by means of a highly refined principle or product.

**Symptomatic:** The evidence bearing parts of a system of deeper problems affecting the entire system.

**Symbiotic relations:** The mutual dependence of two parts of a system upon each other to function effectively.

**Systems theory:** The belief that living organisms are comprised of sub-groups that make up the whole system, but the sum total is greater that each of its parts. Each part affects and is in turn affected by the rest of the parts of the system.

**Teleological:** The theological belief regarding the divine order that exists in the finite world with ultimate purpose in natural phenomena.

**Transgression:** The act of committing an offence.

**Transgressor:** The person who committed an offence.

**Therapeutic relationships:** The professional relationship entered into between two persons in which one is helping the other in need of help to get well.
The Cognitive: The state of knowing from experience or personal view derived from a myriad of perspectives in simultaneous operation.

The Narrative: The use of story-telling to teach valuable life’s lessons. The example of Jesus’ use of parables to teach His audiences.

The Affirmative: Expressed belief in the ability of a person to change, backed up by vested interest, time, and energy geared toward helping to realize the change.

The Beatitudes: The ten points of blessings prescribed in Jesus’ sermon from the mountain to a great multitude of people.

The Fruit of the Spirit: The graces the Spirit develops in an individual that enhances relationship with their fellowman.

The Eating of the pudding: Moving from theory to practice, from knowing to doing in a therapeutic quest.

Third-order change: A higher level change that occurs by changes in one member of the church’s system that causes the entire system to experience change.

Tug-of-war: The opposite pull between two parts of a system.

Turning the sod: The symbol of making a break-through, or breaking new ground toward desired behavior.

Ungraced: The belief that one is not the recipient of grace or a feeling of not being deserving to the extent that one cannot appreciate and receive the free offer.

Under the radar: Having the eyes of scrutiny constantly focused upon another.

Vertical axis: The part of the cross of Jesus that was planted in the ground and pointed towards the heaven to which His head rested and feet were fastened.
You will be with Me in Paradise: The promise Jesus made to the dying man from the cross that assured future eternal salvation.
CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGY OF FORGIVENESS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Systematic Theology on Forgiveness

To gain a correct understanding of the forgiveness concept, it is essential to begin at the right point. "In most versions of Christianity, revelation has served as the epistemological basis for theology; that is, an appeal often has been made to revelation in order to account for knowledge of God." In the theological world, there are varied schools of thought. Some reason from "the cosmological—the existence of the finite world," others reason from "teleological—from the order of the finite world." There is a third school of thought that reasons from "the ontological argument—the implications of the concept of God itself, as being perfect and so necessary."

It cannot be over-emphasized that in seeking to grapple with forgiveness, the understanding and practice of this virtue, the reasoning must begin from God to the cosmos, which includes humankind. What did God say about forgiveness? What did

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6 Ibid., 100.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.
God do in demonstrating forgiveness? These are important questions to ponder. There is
danger in reasoning from social science to God, or from personal experience—
postmodernism to God. It is important to gain understanding of God’s revelation
regarding this concept. Christ, through teaching, preaching, living, and dying on the
cross constitutes God’s ultimate expressions of forgiveness.

Not only must the reason begin from God—it must also continue with God! If
one begins with God and later attempts to divert to another track—the forgiveness train
would be eventually derailed. God remains, therefore, “the Alpha, and Omega” of the
forgiveness motif (Rev 1:8, 17, 18; 21:6, 7). Ray Anderson defines the gospel of
forgiveness in its kerygmatic and paracletic forms. “The kerygmatic form of the gospel
of forgiveness is that ‘all is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ,
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation’”(2 Cor 5:18-21 NKJV). This aspect of
the gospel of forgiveness was made full and complete through the death and resurrection
of Jesus.

God continues to influence and empower humanity in living forgiveness. “The
paracletic form of this gospel of forgiveness is also described in the Pauline letter to the
Thessalonians.” “Our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in
power and in the Holy Spirit and full of conviction. But we are gentle among you, just as
a nursing mother cherishes her own children. We exhorted, and comforted, and charged
every one of you as a father does his children, urging and encouraging you” (1 Thess 1:5;

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9Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological

10Ibid.
2:7, 11 NKJV). When God makes a pronouncement of absolution from sin, both the kerygmatic and parecletic aspects are involved in the process leading to absolution.

Whereas humans cannot pronounce absolution from sins, they can, certainly, exemplify divine forgiveness, by releasing a transgressor from all revengeful desires. The goal of Christianity is to become like Jesus in character, through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Forgiveness has been accomplished on the divine end toward humans; however, on the human end towards God and fellow humans, forgiveness is incomplete. Daily, humanity ought to be working to complete their side of forgiveness in transactions between human to divine, and human to human. Ray S. Anderson adds yet another contribution to the discussion:

The specific goal of divine grace as intervention is forgiveness—the renewal of a positive relation between humans and God. The content of forgiveness is restored relation, not merely the granting of an exception to a moral law. Thus the reality of forgiveness is the restoration of an authentic moral history as being in relation. Forgiveness is the ultimate moral good, which transcends the moral law but does not break it.11

John Macarthur noted two contradictions and misconceptions regarding divine forgiveness. These stem from the fact that forgiveness is not an innate human character trait. So, the tendency of some is to define and measure divine forgiveness by human misunderstanding and standards. “Some people, therefore, find it impossible to envision Almighty God as anything other than stern and unforgiving. Others, knowing that Scripture teaches us God is merciful, imagine that He is so completely indulgent that no sinner really has anything to fear.”12 Such thinking and beliefs result in a kind of bipolar...

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11Anderson. 224.
behavior in humankind. John Macarthur further stated, “When we are on the receiving end of mercy, we naturally esteem forgiveness as one of the highest of all virtues. But when we are the aggrieved party, forgiveness often seems a gross violation of justice.”

Divine forgiveness does not occur “by simply looking the other way when we sin.” To the contrary, the gospel truth in all Scripture is that divine justice—which constitutes God’s nature—and justifying sinners are harmonized (Rom 3:25-26). Only God is capable of reconciling such a conundrum. From the Christian perspective, forgiveness goes deeper than the emotional, psychological, and relational foundations. Forgiveness must be rooted on sound theology, as opposed to the whims and fancy of humankind. Theology has to do with the study of God, thus Christians ought to look for examples and clues of divine forgiveness in some form of revelation regarding God. The Bible, the source book of theology, lays the foundation for understanding forgiveness.

Chris Brauns has this to say on the discussion:

How we live forgiveness out must rest on what we believe theologically. Start with the doctrine of salvation (soteriology). How we believe God forgives us shapes how we forgive others. Or there is the doctrine of the church (ecclesiology). For Christians, forgiveness happens in the local Church. Our doctrine of the Church is key to understanding some of the most important Bible passages on forgiveness such as Matt. 18 or Col. 3. It may not be immediately obvious, but the doctrine of the future work of Christ and the end times (eschatology) is also critical to how we view forgiveness.

To assert salvation is to assert forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness, therefore, is pivotal to the work of Christ in effecting the salvation of fallen humanity. The doctrine

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13 Macarthur. 11.

14 Ibid.

of salvation (soteriology) is God’s forgiveness graciously offered to sinful humanity. Although God lovingly offers His pardoning grace to sinful humanity, it comes at a very high cost. “Motivated by love, God offers forgiveness graciously. God wraps the present of forgiveness and gives it to anyone who will accept the gift. This gift was purchased by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.”16 Lewis Sperry Chafer sheds light on the discussion:

As seen in the Bible, there is an analogy between forgiveness and debt and, in the case of that forgiveness which God exercises, the debt must be paid—though it be paid by Himself—before forgiveness can be extended. Thus it is learned that while human forgiveness only remits a penalty or charge, divine forgiving must require complete satisfaction for the demands of God’s outraged holiness first of all.17

The doctrine of ecclesiology denotes the place where salvation is enacted on a continual basis. Becoming saved, therefore, places one in obligation to forgive others. This is exactly what the ecclesiology, or church experience, ought to be—a loving, forgiving community. In contrasting law and grace pertaining to forgiveness, however, Lewis Sperry Chafer makes two significant distinctions. “To be forgiving because one has already been forgiven of God for Christ’s sake is quite removed from the condition wherein one will be forgiven only in the measure in which he himself forgives. The latter belongs to a merit system such as will obtain in the kingdom: the former is in harmony with present riches and divine grace.”18

How well one embraces God’s grace (soteriology) and lives it out within the community of believers (ecclesiology), has bearing on destiny (eschatology). Ultimately,
Christians expect to live with their loving, forgiving Lord in the eternal kingdom. One would be ill-informed to think that they would be chosen to live with Christ, at the exclusion of someone they could not forgive, in the ecclesiological experience.

Before the cross God passed over sins (Rom 3:25). There was a sort of blanket forgiveness. Scripture further stated that God winked at or refrained from imposing full judgment for sin (Acts 17:30). Forgiveness, though, was shadowed through the animal sacrifice system and priestly mediation. But since the sacrifice served only typically as a covering of sin until the appointed time when God should deal finally or righteously with sin in the death of Christ, the transaction was incomplete on the divine side. However, divine forgiveness as such was extended to the offender perfectly. It is on the basis of this perfect offer of forgiveness, humanity in their pre- and post cross existence, is pardoned and saved.

The theological motivations to forgive are unpacked nicely by Chris Brauns in two stated truths. "The first truth is that God’s central passion is for His Glory” (1 Cor 10:31). "The second truth is that all people pursue joy or happiness.” It is concluded, therefore, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. Humans should work through broken relationships with the awareness that they are glorifying God, this will maximize their joy.” A penchant to show gratitude for God’s grace—soteriology, coupled with the vision of eternal life—eschatology, should inspire forgiveness in the here, and now—ecclesiology. A correct understanding of forgiveness,
along with the right motive, would make this divine concept and command easier realized.

A major element in the forgiveness motif is confession. Lewis Sperry Chafer states, “The simple act of penitent confession results with absolute divine certainty in the forgiveness and cleansing of sin (1 John 1:9). Confession is always directed to God (Ps. 51:4; Luke 15:18, 19). There are times and situations when such admission should be extended to persons wronged also (Jas. 5:16)." There is a significant difference, however, between confession and apology. These two responses to offenses are often confused as being one and the same thing. John Macarthur distinguishes between confession and apology.

The word apology comes from the Greek apologia, which literally means “a speech in defense of.” Apologies are often nothing more than a self-defense: “I’m sorry if you took offense, but....” Genuine repentance is properly expressed in an admission of wrongdoing and a plea for forgiveness: “It was unthoughtful of me to say that.” “Will you forgive me?”

The Seventh-day Adventist theology of forgiveness asserts that it is a virtue upon which human life subsisted since the inception of sin by the first pair of humans. Further, it will be a necessary virtue until God’s visible Kingdom of Glory is established and sin is forever eradicated. Until that time, in achieving forgiveness, however, “the sinful human heart has no resource to produce a sinless holy behavior and thus forestall the future moral injuries. Only God’s grace and power can produce forgiveness.”

22 Chafer. 163.

23 Macarthur. 185.

Forgiveness must be a learning that becomes a part of the human character. It is to be used as the reconnection for the divide caused by hurtful injury on self, and others in the human relations. Sanctification, the work of a lifetime, is manifested through forgiveness processes. "Forgiveness seeks to restore order and the respect of rights and privileges." What makes forgiveness work is the fact that it is not dependent upon the offender. The *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* makes this affirmation:

The offended party must not wait for the offender to repent before proffering pardon. God’s forgiveness amply illustrates this (Rom 5:6-11). The hope of forgiveness motivates the sinner to retrace his steps and repent (Luke 25:17-19), because forgiveness is based on God’s pardon alone. The conditionality of repentance refers to the effectiveness of the pardon already given on an unlimited scale (Matt 18:21, 22). Repentance detaches the offender from the offending attitude and disposition and makes the person receptive to forgiveness.

**Forgiveness Perspectives of This Study**

The rest of this chapter sets forth the theological perspectives undergirding this study. Forgiveness is a simple and yet profound and powerful concept. In it lies the potential to effect healing, personally and relationally. Jesus instructed humanity to give forgiveness to trigger a self-awareness of their need of forgiveness. Not only would they be in need of forgiveness from God but they would also need it from their fellow human beings. Developing a willing attitude to give forgiveness, therefore, sets the stage for humans to receive it when they find themselves on the opposite end.

Having predestined a "self-imposed" constraint to forgive, God used the cross to model its true meaning and efficacy. The apostle Paul states it succinctly:

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25 "Forgiveness," 714.

26 Ibid.
Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:3-7 NKJV).

Even before humanity became alienated from God through sin, Paul declares that God chose, adopted, and accepted them in the Beloved. The divine acts of choosing, adopting, and accepting fallen humanity are manifestations of forgiveness. Perfectly expressed in a sinless world, God ultimately demonstrated His forgiveness through the cross of Christ. It is, therefore, through the cross that the reciprocity of giving and receiving forgiveness is made possible. It makes sense, therefore, that Christians bring their hurt to the cross of Christ and begin their healing there. David Seamands aptly added to the discussion:

When we fail to accept and receive God’s grace and forgiveness, we also fail to give unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people. And this results in a breakdown of our interpersonal relationships. It results in emotional conflicts between us and other people. The unforgiven are the unforgiving, and the unforgiving complete the vicious cycle because they cannot forgive. The vicious cycle becomes more vicious. The unaccepted are unaccepting. The unforgiven are the unforgiving. The ungraced are the ungracious. 27

Genuine forgiveness can have multiple effects and benefits in an individual’s life. It undoubtedly begins to manifest through a change in the heart of the offended person. This change motivates the offended to extend forgiveness to the offender. The offender who may be undeserving of forgiveness may be humbled by the offer. Forgiveness further stretches its reach to bless others who observe the offender and the offended, in

27 Seamands, 31.
the process transactions. There is no better time, place, event, and person that illustrate
the complexities of forgiveness than the crucifixion story.

The cross, therefore, a symbol of disgrace and shame, became a symbol of fame, because the greatest transaction of forgiveness was sealed upon it. It is the means God chose to concurrently display both justice and forgiveness. God's hatred for sin and passionate love and forgiveness for the sinner were simultaneously manifested through the cross. The justice of God holds out His punishment for sin, which the sinner deserves. The forgiveness of God, notwithstanding divine justice, releases the sinner from the punishment. What an amazing grace! Only Christ and the cross can fully explain this conundrum relating to forgiveness and justice. "The place of healing for this damaged person is the cross—the very peak of all injustice. On the cross, God demonstrated His total identification with us in our undeserved suffering, as well as in our deserved punishment." 28

Christ's offering of forgiveness to undeserving perpetrators, even when they did not request or desire it, is the perfect example. Christ looked at the perpetrators and saw their deep-seated ignorance, arrogance and atrocities displayed. The amazing response was, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). Ignorance causes much of the hurt and pain that people experience from the hands of others, even close loved ones. There are two ways in which this ignorance can be categorized. The first is one in which the person in transgression conceals an offense because of shame, taboo, or fear of repercussions. Such individuals may not be aware of the many resources

28 Seamands. 97.
designed to help offended persons. The second involves an obsession with self (pity, blame, negation) that obscures the need to stop the perpetrator who also needs help.

The humanity of Jesus focusing on the personal agony and pain of the crucifixion cried out for self-preservation. “If it is possible let this cup pass from me” (Matt 26:39). This request was not merely about the contents of the cup—but the cup itself, as well. It appears as though Jesus was crying out to be saved from the pain and the symbolic remembrance of the pain by taking this cup away. The pain, however, was for the gain of others. In recognizing this fact, Jesus focused on the gain and meaning of the pain. Recognizing the ignorance of the persecutors and all sinners, Christ offered forgiveness. Though self-preservation is a natural human response to hurt and pain, individuals may never begin the process of forgiveness until they are able see beyond the hurt and pain.

Like Jesus, if offended individuals look beyond the hurt and pain, beyond the transgression and the transgressor, the recognition of ignorance may motivate forgiveness. This notion of ignorance, however, does not automatically release the transgressor from the responsibility and consequences of inflicting the hurt, and neither does it minimize the pain from the hurtful experience that the offended feels. Rather, it generates a new meaning and establishes a platform for understanding oneself, the hurt, and self-initiating the process of healing. It is thus the prophet wrote, “He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied by His knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many” (Isa 53:11). Personal healing and satisfaction for Jesus lay in prospect, assuring that justice would be served, while at the same time, freeing many from the debt of the offense. An understanding of forgiveness processes in no way suggests that all problems pertaining to the hurtful experience will vanish. The stark reality is that a lack of
understanding of forgiveness and its processes can spiral into deeper hurt and pain.

Jesus commands that the offended "go to your brother and tell him his fault... if he will hear you, you have regained your brother" (Matt 18:15). In these words of Jesus, the central focus is on the genuine process, meaning, and outcome of forgiveness. Again, the offended is not the mere focus in achieving the goal of forgiveness. It is not uncommon for the offended to sit in expectation that the first move must be made by the offender. Jesus dispelled this notion by the small word "go" to your transgressor brother. Jesus modeled this principle by moving toward the sinful, guilty human. What about the feelings, safety, and emotional needs of the offended? These are legitimate concerns that cannot be overlooked; however, they are not the only concerns. David Augsburger, a Christian psychologist, contributes to the discussion:

The primary issue is not inner peace for oneself, not moral rightness with one’s own conscience, not assurance of one’s own salvation. These are self-centered, narcissistic goals that are only further evidence of the fact that one is still taking care of predominately one’s own needs, not caring for the relationship or for the pain in the other.29

Jesus exhorts the Christian to avoid going through the motion of service to God while neglecting needed service to a brother they have offended (Matt 5:23, 24). The focus again is off oneself, and in this context it is placed on the one who committed the offence. A careful examination of (Matt 5:23, 24; 18:15) imposes a mutual obligation upon the offender and the offended to make the move toward initiating forgiveness. When a hurt is inflicted, neither the offended nor the offender will be motivated to move to forgiveness by an unhealthy self-focus. The greater the focus on self, the greater will be the hurt and pain or the guilt and shame, respectively. In reality, the offended and the

offender, by looking beyond themselves, can co-establish a safe atmosphere where they can share their deep pain and struggles.

The Vertical and Horizontal Axes of Forgiveness

All humanity offended God and stand in need of divine forgiveness and grace. Yet, as children of God, humans are the objects of divine affection and forgiveness. This truth can be illustrated by the vertical axis of the cross of Christ. Planted on the earth, it pointed toward heaven symbolizing God’s pardon for transgressions, of which none deserve. As recipients of God’s forgiveness and grace, humans are constrained to extend forgiveness to other persons who are undeserving as well. This truth can be illustrated by the horizontal axis of the cross upon which the arms of Christ were stretched out embracing all. “The correct understanding of the teaching of Scripture on forgiveness will go far in the direction of clarifying other doctrines of the Bible.”30 There is a biblical principle that requires much from whom much is given. It is pathetic to see individuals who were recipients of much forgiveness withholding forgiveness from others who offend and hurt their person. Chris Brauns supports this vertical/horizontal concept of forgiveness by outlining how Christians should forgive interpersonally:

Forgiveness: A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated. This definition retains the central elements of how God forgives. First, Christians should forgive graciously. Biblical forgiveness is a freely offered gift motivated by love. In biblical forgiveness, the forgiving person pays the price of forgiveness.31

30 Chafer. 7:161.
31 Brauns. 55.
There is a reciprocal nature of forgiveness illustrated by Christ in His model prayer. Jesus taught disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt 6:12). The measuring rod that one uses to forgive another debtor is the same one they are asking to be used in forgiving them of debts against God. The extent to which one acknowledges and shows gratitude to God for forgiveness, he or she ought to reciprocate the same to the debtors. Jesus told the story of two debtors to amplify the reciprocity of forgiveness. A servant who owed ten thousand talents fell before their master's feet, and begged for mercy, that would allow time to repay the debt. The master being moved with compassion released the servant, and forgave the debt.

It is ironic how the forgiven servant, in going out from the master's presence, encountered an indebted fellow servant and demanded immediate payment. The debt owed was infinitesimal compared to that which the forgiven servant's master forgave. It was an insult to the master's forgiveness when the forgiven servant physically abused a fellow servant and initiated imprisonment. The earlier forgiveness of the master, the posture and cry for patience in the recent experience, meant nothing in dealing with a fellow colleague. The master had no recourse than to reverse the forgiveness of the ten thousand talents and throw the servant into prison (Matt 18:23-35). The servant was in prison for the long haul with tortures, as the debt was enormous and impossible to repay. The debt of gratitude felt for the forgiveness each receives from God will be reflected in their forgiveness of others who wronged them. "It is true that he may have received forgiveness; but his unmerciful spirit shows that he now rejects God's pardoning love. He has separated himself from God, and is in the same condition as before he was
forgiven. He has denied his repentance, and his sins are upon him as if he had not repented.\textsuperscript{32}

It appears sometimes that the most unforgiving persons are those who were themselves forgiven of immense debts. It is not uncommon to sit on church boards and encounter individuals who are highly insistent on maintaining “the purity” of the Church. They foster harsh discipline on others and may accuse the pastor of being negligent in failure to impose the same. In twenty-two years of pastoral ministry, it has been my experience that often such advocates have incredibly ugly personal histories from which they needed or still need forgiveness. In some cases, their past was either overlooked or dealt with graciously. One would think that those individuals should be eager to reciprocate the same measure meted out to them. To the contrary, there seems to be a selective memory of their past. In the parable of the two debtors, Jesus portrayed an unforgiving person as reassuming the burden of paying for their past forgiven debts.

“Forgiveness does not change the past but it does enlarge the future. Our reactions have much to do with the state of our souls. Our greatest challenge is to forgive those who angered us. In order to break free, we have to release resentment and judgment we may hold over others.”\textsuperscript{33}

“Forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors” (Matt 6:12), is the model prayer Jesus left the Christian, and each determines the reciprocity of forgiveness. It is more emphatic when Jesus instructs Christians not to neglect to forgive anyone who hurt them.


\textsuperscript{33}Linda Mintle. \textit{Breaking Free from Anger and Unforgiveness} (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002). 87.
when they stand to pray (Mark 11:25). They should forgive them that their Father in heaven may also forgive their trespasses. Failure to do so will result in your heavenly Father withholding forgiveness from you (Mark 11:26). In this context, the attitude of a forgiving spirit carries more value and weight than the actual debt owed the master. Like both debtors in the parable, humans are incapable of repaying the debt owed God. Humankind brings God much joy through loving gratitude shown for divine forgiveness by extending the same to their debtors. This cannot be achieved by human will and effort alone. The cross and its intersecting axes make this seemingly impossible task possible. The process is succinctly expressed in the following:

Forgiveness is a most radical response to the most radical assault on the human soul. It involves both parties, bringing both to a humble recognition of a need for dependence on their Father in heaven. Excuse, weakness, or indifference does not clear the wounded relationship enough to prevent infection and assure healing. Forgiveness reroutes the human relation through Jesus Christ so that the other is treated, understood, and respected as Christ’s merits deserve.

Couched in the Old Testament of the Bible is a classic example of an individual who freely gave forgiveness, horizontally, to a fellow human being. The same was reciprocated when in desperate need of it, vertically, from God. David’s accession to the throne was impeded for many years by King Saul’s protracted jealousy, hatred, and anger. Many personal attempts were made on David’s life by King Saul. David, on the other hand, had at least two clear-cut opportunities to assassinate King Saul. This would have ended all misery of living on constant high alert to preserve life. It would have also given full access to the kingdom given by God and acclaimed by the people. On each occasion it appears that David intentionally chose to forgive King Saul.

34 Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology. 715.
Upon securing the kingdom, David sought for any remaining descendent of Saul to show them kindness (2 Sam 9)—amazing forgiveness! King David appeared highly dysfunctional in familial relationships. Personal actions and decisions brought many deep-seated hurts to the lives of loved ones. Though David defeated Goliath, there was a giant that presented great difficulty conquering. This giant was the unhealthy relationships within David’s family and other subjects of the kingdom. David’s life, however, shows that God is extremely merciful, patient, loving, and forgiving.

Successful people are not exempt from relationship difficulties. David’s life revealed God’s desire to change humans through forgiving, healing, and restoring actions. King David’s apparent eagerness to forgive even the most relentless enemy—King Saul paid dividends. This attitude of forgiveness was reciprocated by God, even after David had committed notorious and heinous crimes and sins.

Jesus instructed in Mark 11:25, 26, “When you stand praying if you have anything against anyone, forgive that one, that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in Heaven forgive your trespasses.” King David ends up on the opposite side of forgiveness—the receiving side (Ps 51). David’s life is an example of the play and counter-play within the gamut of the vertical and horizontal axes of forgiveness. David clearly understood that to transgress against mankind was to transgress against God (Ps 51:4). What stands out in the life of David is how God is eager to forgive the individual who acknowledges personal transgression and makes the confession (Ps 51:3, 4). Had David acted mean in forgiving humankind the response in the prayer seeking personal forgiveness and outcome would have been different. It is a biblical principle that humans reap what they
sow. Quite often, however, the reaping can prove to be more painful than the sowing.

Extending and Receiving Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be viewed as a significant intervention for healing interpersonal injury. A community of people, whether family, church, school, or work organization cannot coexist without intermittently offending another. Sometimes, the very nature of the relationship may be conducive to inflicting inadvertent or inadvertent hurt. Forgiveness, therefore, is a necessary tool that each should master because every individual operates in some type of group. There is a difference between a functional group (family, church, etc.), and one that is dysfunctional or destined to disintegrate. The willingness and eagerness to confess behavior that produces hurt, and to extend and receive forgiveness, may distinguish between a functional and a dysfunctional group. This should become a way of life as opposed to mediated process.

It is believed that in the ancient Jewish community, there was a limit imposed on forgiving three times (Amos 1:3). It was apparently against this backdrop that Peter tested the degree of tolerance Jesus had in forgiving offenses of another. The disciple was asking Jesus to lay down the ultimate rule regarding the true measure of forgiveness. Peter was confident, going beyond the rabbinical rule to receive the approbation of Jesus for generosity concerning forgiveness. Jesus uses this challenge to teach forgiveness as an attitude as opposed to a mere act—until seventy times seven (Matt 18:21, 22). It would be difficult for one to keep count to the seventy-seventh, let alone, the 499th time of forgiving another. It would be far more challenging to do so with accuracy, considering humanity's finite nature. "He who harbors within himself the idea that at
some future time he will not forgive, is far from extending true forgiveness even though he may go through the form of forgiving.  

Within the community of believers in particular, forgiveness cannot be a mere formality, for Christ presides as head of the church. Divine Omnipotence and Omniscience make no mistake when it comes to scrutiny of thoughts, motives, and actions relating to forgiveness. "If the spirit of forgiveness actuates the heart, a person will be ready to forgive a repentant soul the eighth time as the first time, or the 491st time as the eighth." It would appear, therefore, there is absolutely no justification for an unforgiving spirit. A mere reflection upon the many times mankind were recipients of God's limitless forgiveness will be inspiring to extend this courtesy to their offenders. "We are not forgiven because we forgive, but as we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own."

It can be concluded, therefore, that genuine forgiveness will necessitate that the offended gains mastery over resentment. This does not necessarily mean that the offended ought to refrain from acknowledging the feeling of resentment and the entitlement to such feelings. In spite of the feeling, and justification relating to resentment towards an offender, another feeling ought to emerge. This new feeling can be described as love, mercy, and a desire to be gracious rather than revengeful. This is

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36Ibid.

37White, Christ's Object Lessons, 251.
where teachings such as "The Beatitudes" and "The Fruit of the Spirit" are tested by the Christian. A sort of role reversal takes place in the mind of the offended. It is like placing oneself on the other end of the spectrum, or wearing the shoes of the offender for a moment.

God deals with sinners in a manner that provides "a rainbow" of hope that things are going to become better. The first pair of human beings was given this hope before their exit from the Garden of Eden. This same hope was breathtaking for Noah and family as the rainbow appeared. The ultimate manifestation of this hope came through Christ's words and actions while on the cross. "You will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43 NKJV) were the words of hope the dying thief last heard and cherished.

An offender who becomes remorseful, may also experience a diminished sense of worth in the eyes of the offended and significant others. Moreover, God is sensitive to the sense of worthlessness sinners may experience. God takes the initiative to begin rebuilding self-esteem by offering forgiveness to the offender. Scripture declares (Gen 3:9 NKJV): "Then the Lord called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Humanity does not go seeking after God—God comes seeking after humankind. Though it may not be prudent in all circumstances, humankind needs to develop the attitude of God in seeking after their fellow transgressor. This can be manifested through a mental quest that reaches out and offers forgiveness before it is sought by the transgressor. This idea runs contra to human's attitudinal posture of expecting and waiting for a transgressor to make the first move. Had God acted like humankind it would have been catastrophic for the whole of humanity.
Living a Forgiven Life

It is one thing to have an intellectual belief that God has forgiven, or that the offended person has forgiven. Many who have sought forgiveness and accepted theoretically that they had been forgiven may still manifest behaviors of guilt, shame, and recrimination. Difficulty living a forgiven life may manifest in varied symptomatic forms such as: withdrawal, over compensatory gestures, repetitive compulsive behaviors, paranoid projection, and insecurity. These behaviors may be displayed even when genuine forgiveness has been extended. There appears to be something that makes the transgressor keep on believing that they have not been forgiven, despite hearing words and seeing gestures of forgiveness from the offended.

The difficulty of living a forgiven life may be a challenge for both the offended and the offender. The struggle apparently lies in a desire to be perfect again before God, or in the eyes of the offended or offender, and significant others respectively. Such struggle may lead to two extremes that can interfere with living a forgiven life: (1) guilt, and (2) perfectionism. David Belgum found that guilt and perfectionism have the potential to undermine spiritual and emotional well-being. “Neurotic and psychotic breakdown may be an involuntary confession of guilt, just as many symptoms are the amplified and distorted voice of conscience. The appropriate action for one so stricken would be penitence in the face of guilt, rather than a plea of irresponsible illness.”

Humans are generally inclined to use the defense mechanism of rationalization when burdened by guilt. They look for external causes to blame, as both Adam and Eve

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did, when confronted by God for their misdeeds. Adam placed the burden on Eve who in turn transferred it to the serpent (Gen 12. 13). Neither of them accepted responsibility and in actuality were blaming God for their actions. "A concrete, specific feeling of guilt which can be related to a particular, precise act or attitude is generally a true and reliable feeling of guilt."39 The other extreme, perfectionism, is apparently driven by unrealistic expectations. These expectations may be self-imposed or they may come from the one that was offended, or significant others. The bars of attainment are raised high and the best performance of any human works renders it impossible to achieve. David Belgum makes yet another contribution to the discussion:

Perfectionism is a counterfeit for Christian perfection, holiness, sanctification, or the Spirit-filled life. Instead of making us holy persons and integrated personalities—that is whole persons in Christ—perfectionism leaves us spiritual Pharisees and emotional neurotics. Neurotics are people who build castles in the air, psychotics are those who move into them; and psychiatrists are the ones who collect rent!40

There are belief and practice around forgiveness, embedded in erroneous doctrines of the early and medieval churches. An example is the right of exomologesis which has no scriptural basis. This is a state of despair in which the sinner struggles against great bewildering odds to achieve forgiveness. "Our beliefs affect our concept, our feelings, and our relationships. They affect the way we look at life, and God, at others and ourselves."41 When one understands and embraces the doctrine of sanctification, a clear perspective of forgiveness and acceptance emerges. Justification by faith—"salvation does not give instant emotional health. It is impossible to know how

39Seamands, 114.
40Ibid., 49, 76.
41Ibid., 11-12.
a Christian person is merely on the basis of his outward behavior." God in Christ can identify with our desperate cry for freedom from guilt and perfection. Having been touched with humanity's infirmities, Jesus' perfect life substitutes for humankind's imperfect life.

It would appear therefore, that one cannot truly appreciate forgiveness until one understands what it means to live a forgiven life. It is also impossible to give what a person does not have and relate to what that person has not experienced. Just as Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39). By the same token, one may be able to forgive others to the extent that they have lived forgiveness in their own life.

During air travel, passengers are instructed to secure their oxygen mask first, in the event of loss in cabin pressure. Each is instructed to do so before attempting to help dependent associates. It could be futile and fatal for responsible individuals and those in their care if they neglected to secure their mask first. While attempting to secure other dependants masks they are losing oxygen and all are struggling for survival. The repetitive compulsive behavior of securing the mask of dependants will eventually cause them all to turn blue and expire.

A healthy life-concept seems extremely important to embracing, and living forgiveness. In living a forgiven life, however, it would be crucial to know where to draw the line between acknowledging wrong behavior and excusing it. It would be important to direct energies at understanding oneself, rather than in blaming oneself, in the quest for forgiveness. Accepting that human beings are fallible, subject to limitations, shortcomings, and inadequacies may be an antidote to guilt and perfectionism.

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42Seamands, 11-12.
Humankind shares a common heritage that makes each vulnerable to being offended and to offend in their relationships. Human beings, therefore, would need forgiveness as long as they exist in this sinful world. The Christian has the hope of being recreated in God’s image to wholeness and perfection again. The apostle Paul states. “But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18 NKJV). Until the completion of this transformation, Christians are to live as forgiven children of God upon the merits of the perfect sacrifice and life of Jesus Christ.

Restorative Justice and Forgiveness

Genuine forgiveness may at times necessitate some kind of payback for the hurt and pain inflicted upon another. The act of an offended freeing an offender from smoldering thoughts of anger and resentment does not always mean the offender walks free of consequences. God extended forgiveness to Adam and Eve and still drove them out from the Garden and guarded against their immediate return. God further announced the new and hard conditions under which they were to exist.

It may not be feasible to expect that for each offense, forgiveness and restoration to a prior relationship with the offended person happens instantaneously. The reality was that Adam and Eve were unable to pay the price for restoration and justice that their transgressions imposed. God offered the Son as full payment, for the justice sin demands and for restoration of humanity to favor with divinity. This payment was sealed before the foundation of the world, yet it requires time to heal the broken relationship. “The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ the Son of God stood between the living and the dead, saying, let
the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place. He shall have another chance.”

In practical terms, who pays for the offenses of a person against another? In human relationships the offender and the offended may each pay the price personally. The offender may bear guilt and remorse that may be exacerbated by resentment and by the offended resorting to the judicial system, or acting vindictively. In reality, no one may be declared a clear-cut winner in matters relating to offenses in human relationships. The stark reality is that the offended is in danger of being a victim twice. When this happens, the offended pays double: one cost is the offense itself, and the other is the emotional turmoil that has potentially crippling physical or psychological consequences.

There seems to exist a symbiotic relationship between human beings’ emotional and physical well-being. It is, thus, that humans’ emotional pain can eventually translate into physical pain. God desires that born-again Christians “prosper and maintain good health” (3 John 2). There is a certain level of responsibility that each has for developing and maintaining personal health and well-being. It is believed that justice is served when an offended person chooses not to be victimized twice. People do so by releasing their debtor from seething thoughts of anger and resentment. Regardless of the offense, there is a way of achieving restoration from personal as well as relational losses. Don Colbert, a medical doctor, adds to the discussion by commenting on destructive emotions:

Certain emotional states are much more damaging than others. Extreme joy and extreme sorrow both exert physical stress. But intense grief is far more damaging than intense joy. We have something of a stress gauge in our bodies. The emotions

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that are most damaging are rage, unforgiveness, depression, anger, worry, frustration, fear, grief, and guilt.\textsuperscript{44}

The concept of sickening one's body by nurturing negative emotions is quite sobering. If forgiveness is an antidote to self-inflicted diseases and pain, then forgiveness makes a whole lot of sense. Forgiveness is a matter of personal choice. Jesus chose forgiveness when hanging from the cross as opposed to acting revengeful.

The choice factor includes accepting personal responsibility for the outcomes. In the context of this study, outcomes are related to emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. The well-being of humankind impacts destiny in this life and the next. The act of shifting one's emotions from the pain and hurtful experience to that of expressing benevolence towards the offender, seems to be an ongoing choice in the process of forgiving others. Paul Yelsma, a researcher in the area of forgiveness and supporter of the study makes this contribution:

Yet the insights pertaining to interpersonal communication skills associated with forgiveness are not well understood. A relatively large percentage of persons possessing Jewish or Christian faith orientations have gained their perspectives of forgiveness from various combinations of Old and New Testament literature that offers two major perspectives on the process of forgiveness. First, confession of sins has been heralded to be of crucial value in the forgiveness process. In the Book of Genesis 50:17, the guidance is stated, “This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.” Also, confession to one’s deity seeking forgiveness can be summarized as follows, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and He will forgive the guilt of my sins” Ps. 32:3-4.\textsuperscript{45}

Forgiveness within human relationships remains a goal to be attained to. All of


the major world religions teach forgiveness and enjoin adherents to practice it. It is viewed as pleasing to some deity when forgiveness is practiced in most religious circles. There seems to be a vertical and horizontal movement in forgiveness in all major religions involving human beings and their deity as well. The greatest symbol of the vertical and horizontal flow in forgiveness, however, is the cross. In every culture, the people who value interpersonal relationships may also acknowledge that forgiveness is necessary for building and maintaining healthy relationships. As long as sin reigns, people will need to practice this virtue of forgiveness. Being in close relationship with another involves the risk of advertently or inadvertently creating offenses through words, deeds, and non-deeds—as in sins of omission or neglect. Human beings are constantly at the risk of offending or being offended.

**Spiritual Lenses on Forgiveness**

Spirituality is the awareness that humanity possesses a second nature—the spiritual nature as well as the physical nature. It further involves a personal voluntary surrender of the desires of the physical nature, which naturally controls mankind, in favor of the control by the spiritual nature. For the Christian, this occurs when Christ through the Spirit dwells within an individual’s heart and influences every aspect of their being. The apostle Paul summarizes it succinctly in writing: “I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Naturally, the physical nature chooses evil, but the spiritual brings deliverance from such bad choices (Rom 7:14-25; 8:1). A person who is wronged chooses anger, resentment, vendetta, and unforgiveness in the physical nature. The same person would pursue forgiveness when the spiritual nature is influencing his or her life.
Spirituality can be considered as the basis for the ultimate meaning and expression of forgiveness. Any attempt to achieve genuine forgiveness, in some way, has to connect with its spiritual base or nature. Through spirituality people find hints and answers, and generate assumptions as to why they suffer in their psyches and experience hurt in their relationships. Further, humankind discovers the secrets to healing, emotional well-being, and happiness through spirituality. There is a symbiotic relationship between healthy functioning and the spiritual aspect of one's life. This is driven by beliefs and assumptions which in part or in large are influenced by a person's religious upbringing and faith community.

When a catastrophe befalls a nation or people group they resort to prayer, reading of Scriptures, and going to church. To downplay the role of spirituality is to deny a vital aspect of the human existence. Spirituality is eventually considered a vital part of secular therapy. In the religious community this significant tool is often downplayed in dealing with interpersonal transgressions and hurts. Spirituality while becoming more and more integrated in the mental health therapeutic approaches maintains certain principles. The responsibility is always left with the individual to choose and direct their spiritual journey. In essence, no one has the right to coerce another to forgive even in the spiritual faith community. One can be taught the spiritual value of forgiveness in their well-being and use it as an indicator of growth along their spiritual journey. Spiritual leaders and counselors can facilitate, encourage, coach, and model the way of forgiving from a spiritual perspective. The offended individual however, must never be robbed of the right to choose to forgive.

More and more people are embracing Christianity from heathen countries around
the world. As these individuals convert they are bringing with them spiritual worldviews that are deeply ingrained. A Hindu, raised believing in karma and reincarnation, may struggle with the Christian doctrine of justification through faith after converting. Achieving forgiveness may be a difficult concept to embrace from the Christian’s worldview which offers it in the present existence. A Buddhist convert may readily embrace the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and retreating in the quest to achieving forgiveness. They may have a low motivation for reconciliatory relationship, while they may focus more on personal holiness in achieving forgiveness. An Islamic convert on the other hand, may find the Christian faith too tolerable of offenders. They may desire to see a Sharia-law type of response to offenses and offenders.

The challenge spiritual leadership may face could be how to incorporate such different spiritual concept, regarding achieving forgiveness, into personal, interpersonal, and therapeutic relationships? This can prove to be even more difficult for leaders who are inflexible in their religious belief and practice. Such leaders may be unreasonable and delineate precise specifications and measurements for their particular belief system. But, if the spiritual holds secrets of success in the matter of forgiveness humankind needs to develop mastery in its use. As professionals it would be rewarding to give attention to three key elements of spirituality in forgiveness. They are: (1) the cognitive, (2) the narrative, and (3) the affirmative. Jesus used these three elements in dealing with personal and interpersonal forgiveness. Jesus was always thinking, talking, and affirming spirituality in teaching and administering of forgiveness.

The Gospel of John 8 records the story of a woman who was accused of adultery. Allegedly caught in the very act, the accused person was dragged before Jesus for the
enforcing of Moses' law of stoning to death. The whole scenario was really a test for Jesus. Spiritual leaders and counselors need to be aware that many forgiveness issues brought before them for mediation can be tests. They might think that it is their experience, skills, and expertise that are being tested. In reality, it may be their spirituality and character that are on the line. In this narrative, Jesus was being set up. The escape from the snare of the Scribes and Pharisees lay in the Savior's ability to think cognitively, talk narratively, and work affirmatively.

**Introduction of Framework for Forgiveness Intervention**

The next three sections set forth the framework for forgiveness intervention. This framework is a biblical approach understood to be one of the ways in which Jesus worked. The model is built upon critical thinking skills, re-defining of the problem situation, and challenging adoption of the new perspective of life. This three-step approach is a simple method that spiritual leaders and lay persons can use.

**Thinking Cognitively**

In working with an individual towards achieving forgiveness not only is the individual affected by the leader's influence—the leader is also affected in the process. "Advocates of second-order cybernetics insist that there can be no outside, independent observer of a system, since anyone attempting to observe and change a system is by definition a participant who both influences and, in turn, is influenced by that system."46 Jesus demonstrated an awareness of the spiritual work undergirding the mission being

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undertaken. Christ did not come to condemn but to forgive, save, set free, and make whole again. Jesus was aware of the accused woman's sin and need of forgiveness. Jesus was also aware of the Scribes' and Pharisees' pretentious piety and their need of forgiveness and salvation as well. In fact, this seemed clearly evident by Jesus' act of writing their sins in the dust. Jesus was apparently sending a subliminal message to the Scribes and Pharisees. The message probably was, forgive this woman because you are in need of forgiveness too. Jesus' cognition further facilitated self-awareness as to the true condition of all who entered the divine presence.

Each individual processes, makes decision, and takes action based on mental models that influence how they see reality and relate in the world. As cognitive theorist Edward DeBeno illustrates, "Your mental models are the result of a physiological process in which the neural networks of your brain work to categorize and organize the endless stream of complex information you take in every day."47

Thinking spirituality in dealing with forgiveness requires a keen awareness of the people and nuances involved. Human leaders must be constantly cognizant. However, unlike Jesus, they are fallible and in need of forgiveness too. This attitude should generate empathy for the victim and convey sympathy for the offender. It would enable spiritual leaders to subdue their personal biases and prejudices as they help individuals along their journey of achieving forgiveness. Goldenberg and Goldenberg support the discussion with this significant contribution:

Males and females typically are indoctrinated from early in life into different gender role behavior in the family. As a result of differing socialization experience, members of each sex for the most part develop distinct behavioral expectations. are

granted disparate opportunities, and have different life experiences. However, as society’s awareness of the crucial role of gender—as a determinant of personal identity, socio-cultural privilege or oppression—has grown in recent decades, largely as a result of the feminist movement, so has recognition of the need to overcome gender stereotypes that limit psychological functioning for both sexes.\(^{48}\)

This awareness ought to subdue any inclination to be judgmental. It should also serve as a check and balance to the leader counter-transferring personal emotions either to the offended or the offender. This is crucial more so in dealing with the offender. Further, as in the case in point of the woman caught in adultery, leaders must be cognitive of gender, culture, and all other differences, and remain objective. The real problem is not so much that humans have mental models about how the world works. “The trouble occurs when our brains do the job too well, and we force-fit everything we see into categories that worked for us in the past.”\(^{49}\)

**Working Narratively**

Jesus brought out lessons relating to forgiveness by telling stories. Christ talked about forgiveness as being an important quality of the Christian character. Jesus told a story(s) highlighting forgiving and the joy and blessing it brings personally and relationally (Luke 11:32). Jesus told a story(s) related to unforgiving and the consequence to the individual (Matt 18:23-34). Jesus also told a story(s) as to what it truly means to live a forgiven life (Luke 7:40-50). Loving gratitude and benevolence are evidences of living a forgiven life.

The use of story-telling is not analogous to providing an objective description of

\(^{48}\)Goldenberg and Goldenberg. 5.

\(^{49}\)Hutchens. 63.
the problem. The goal rather is to simulate distinctions that are accountable to being heuristic in bringing together certain experiences and situations that highlight and hold out the possibility of achieving the desired goal. A major challenge in overcoming undesired problems is that the individual attaches self to the problem, or significant others attach the problem to the individual. The spiritual leader has to acquire mastery in at least two things: (1) re-definition of the problem as Jesus did by writing in the dust, and (2) detachment of the individual from the undesired behavior. There is a sudden shift in the mental state when the woman in the story is classified as one who committed adultery as opposed to being the adulterer woman deserving of stoning to death.

People live out self-fulfilling prophecies. There seems to be in humans a latent negative energy that is powerless to defy their and others expectation to live different from the undesired behavior. Imagine the possibilities if leaders channelled that energy towards overcoming the unwanted behavior. This would be better accomplished through re-defining and detaching—drawing a distinction between the individual and the behavior. The leader, going one step further as coach, joins the individual, thus providing double power to achieve the desired result. White and Epston, renowned narrative therapists, have this to say:

The success of this storying of experience provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives, and this is relied upon for ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences. Since all stories have a beginning (or history), a middle (or present), and an ending (or a future), then the interpretation of current events is as much future-shaped as it is past-determined.  

Jesus was very objective in the approach of narrating and talking about the topic

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of forgiveness. The Lord painted a graphic picture of the pros and cons of forgiveness on the canvas of the minds of hearers. In the case of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (John 8:7). The reality was that each saw themselves in the woman, condemned and in need of forgiveness. The result was a pile of stones—each dropped their stones and vanished from the woman’s and Jesus’ presence. Working from a narrative approach would give the offended and offender an opportunity to re-author the story of their personal life.

Sharing personal stories of leaders’ own struggles with forgiveness can prove beneficial to others in their quest, or when they are stuck on issues related to forgiveness. When spiritual leaders make themselves vulnerable, people will perceive them as real people with real issues like themselves. They would trust by allowing them to influence their spiritual journey of forgiveness. By becoming flesh and blood, Jesus also was “touched with the feelings of human infirmity.” The human race can trust God because of the humanity embraced by the divine nature. Jesus could identify with humanity’s struggles, having been through the same experiences. People love to listen to and learn from storytelling. Children, as well as adults, appreciate this art form. Often, what people tend to remember most are the stories of life. More captivating are the success stories that offer a formula for quality of life. It was the method Jesus used and was astoundingly successful.

Coaching Affirmatively

“Coaching helps people expand their vision, build their confidence, unlock their
potential, increase their skills, and take practical steps toward their goal.51 People will move along the path of forgiveness better when confidence is expressed in their ability to forgive or live a forgiven life. This was another technique Jesus employed in the work of forgiveness. In the case of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Having forgiven the woman, Jesus further affirmed that she could possess the ability to live a forgiven life. The fact that Jesus expressed confidence in the woman’s ability to live a forgiven life is a significant end to the story on forgiveness. Much forgiveness work may have reached anticlimaxes due to a leadership’s lack of vested confidence in an offended or an offender being able to live a forgiven life. A part of a leadership’s role is to hold out the possibility for achievement and growth in forgiveness before the one(s) they are helping.

For many the struggle is not merely with extending or receiving forgiveness. Many struggle with living the forgiven life and herein lies the bedrock of emotional turmoil. Spiritual leaders and counselors must affirm the small steps individuals take toward forgiveness. Deep seated wounds and hurts may not be healed and overcome with a word or mediation session. The mere thought or desire of a hurting individual to forgive must be affirmed. It is no small thing for an individual who is hurting to think about and desire forgiveness. The Christian leader as a coach to the individual(s) seeking to achieve forgiveness enters “a loving relationship in which they are further along in the journey of life and willing to guide others as a trusted model.”52


It is important to underscore that there may not be a quick fix to achieving forgiveness. This is often expected and required in the religious community to be in good graces and fellowship. Too often people are coerced and manipulated into expressing words of forgiveness followed by a hand shake and/or a hug. When they walk away from that encounter they continue to manifest an unforgiving spirit. Thereafter, a spirit of collusion may emerge within the community that ignores negative behaviors following the statement of forgiveness. The church community celebrates the moment of handshaking and/or hugging along with the statement of forgiveness. People need to be held more accountable in the religious community. There needs to be a better alignment of words with actions in expressing Christian faith and growth. Spiritual leaders cannot re-invent the wheel of forgiveness that Christ taught and modeled in life and ministry. Neither should they diminish the requirements and methodology of Jesus in working toward forgiveness.

"Christ's method alone will bring true success in reaching people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'follow me.' 

The method of Christ is what will help spiritual leaders in their work of fostering forgiveness. Thinking cognitively, working narratively, and coaching affirmatively were techniques Jesus used. People will follow leaders they trust, and will give them the right to influence the direction of their lives. It is the leader's responsibility to create and build trust by acting in trustworthy ways. This trust can be facilitated through leadership

vulnerability. This would create an atmosphere of safety that fosters and maintains the offended person’s confidence. That is precisely what God modeled through the incarnation, life, and death of the Son on the cross. Leadership insularity will encourage the same in the people being helped. God did not stay in heaven to help humankind. Rather God veiled divinity in humanity self-disclosing and creating a permanent bond with humankind. David Augsburger, an authority on the subject, states:

To be forgiven of God for our daily trespasses, we must forgive, accept, and love. God’s forgiveness gives us freedom to love and live creatively. The rush of God’s strength, which brings forgiveness, gives in turn the ability to forgive, and forgive, and forgive, not just seven times, as the apostle Peter once volunteered, but seventy times seven, as Christ taught in an unforgettable story Matthew 18:21-35.  

**Modeling the Way**

Spiritual leaders are often offended and hurt by the very people they lead. Nothing can be more impacting and influencing than modeling forgiveness when offended. In Exod 32:32, Moses can be seen as the great leader of Israel asking God to forgive the people. The prophet did so despite the fact that their words and actions hurt. When God offered to wipe Israel out and make a new nation, Moses begged God to spare them. The leader’s life was offered God in exchange for the forgiveness of the stiff-necked and rebellious nation. God acquiesces to Moses’ plea for forgiveness of the people but reinforced personal responsibility for transgressions.

Forgiveness is a personal matter, as is salvation, though it may involve relational components. The offended person must desire forgiveness and take personal action to achieve it. Spiritual leaders can be helpful through modeling, coaching, and affirming
but they cannot deliver forgiveness on a platter to the offended. When offended they must themselves walk the path to achieving forgiveness and living a forgiven life. The example and methods of Jesus hold the secrets to experiencing true forgiveness. The cross makes it possible to achieve the freedom that forgiveness brings. Humanity, therefore, owes it to God for providing the means and the method through the Son, Jesus Christ. An unforgiving spirit, therefore, is inexcusable and becomes the template by which God gauges humanity’s forgiveness. In essence, humankind determines how God forgives them by the way they forgive each other. "The church is a learning culture. One essence of leadership is to make sure the church knows itself as a learning organism, and then for the leadership to embody those characteristics that make it unique."55

The postmodern approaches to relational health and well-being do not comprise the major source of information on relationship building. The Bible presents a depth, richness, and freshness of information pertinent to everyday living. It is the foundation and source of Christian theology. In the postmodern current that has swept across the world, a growing penchant for the latest information on any given subject was created. Daily books are being revised and new methods are being adopted while people continue to struggle with the same issues.

Avowed and strident critics of the Bible have postulated for years that religion is a major contributory factor to illness. The notion though unsubstantiated has cast a dark shadow over religious perspectives in counseling and psychology. Extremism and fanaticism on the part of religious leaders and adherents have triggered this group of

55Sweet, 95.
critics. There has been, however, a shift in the postmodern era that drew even a renowned atheist such as Albert Ellis to take another look at the Bible and its relevance in the lives of humankind.

Ellis now says it is fanatical and rigid religious beliefs, not religion per se, that cause problems. Ellis even endorsed the Bible as a useful self-help book in a 1993 article: “I think that I can safely say that the Judeo-Christian Bible is a self help book that has probably enabled more people to make more extensive and intensive personality and behavioral changes than all professional therapists combined.” This is an incredible shift in position and a remarkable endorsement for the role of the Bible and religion as being pivotal to achieving behavioral changes. Spiritual leaders should refrain from being timid and apologetic in highlighting Scripture as they work with individuals along their journey of forgiveness. This does not, however, rule out the use of established workable methods of successfully helping individuals. What is needed is a balance perspective that refrains from “disposing of the baby with the bath water” syndrome.

Like ancient Israel in the wilderness, the church it would appear, is caught up in the Postmodern Currents wilderness. The church seems to be making circles in the wilderness of the information age and spiritual leaders appear to be unprepared to get their followers into “the Promised Land.” There are hurting people within any given congregation who are tired of going around in circles while being arms’ length from their hearts’ desire. While new ideas and methods are to be encouraged, they must not be adopted at the expense of Biblical theology and principles. Only as the leadership of

56McMinn, 5.
ancient Israel committed to and followed God's prescription for success were they able to make it into the "Promised Land."

People want to follow leaders they can trust—leaders who know where they are going and can get them there. People generally know where they want to go but are often ignorant as to how they could get there. Spiritual leaders must be prepared to show their followers the way. It was the apostle Paul who declared: "Be followers of me even as I also am a follower of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). The NKJV renders it: "IMITATE me, just as I also imitate Christ." A very important aspect of leadership has to do with the ability to follow. If leadership does the right thing, the people would also do the right thing and the converse is also true. For the Christian, the standard by which right and wrong are measured is the Bible. Robert Greenleaf, a leading thinker in the field of leadership, adds this:

A new moral principle is emerging which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. Those who chose to follow this principle will not casually accept the authority of existing institution. Rather, they will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted servants.  

The genuine spiritual leader will consider as a matter of high priority meeting the needs of the ones they are leading as opposed to self-serving. This would necessitate a transformation in their thinking and acting. It would require that the spiritual leader knows Jesus and is in constant contact with Him. This is crucial in that the destiny of the ones being led, are within the sphere of their constant influence. "Personal transformation comes when our relationship with God is not just one part of our lives.

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Personal transformation is fueled when Jesus becomes a dynamic, ongoing presence every moment we live.  

In the matter of forgiveness, spiritual leaders have a wonderful opportunity not merely to teach principles of achieving forgiveness—they can also model the way for their followers. This will bring greater satisfaction to their work. It would also afford a continued peace in the leaders’ own souls as they themselves experience and live forgiveness in their own lives. “A good rule of thumb in a major change effort is: Never underestimate the magnitude of the forces that reinforce complacency and that help maintain the status quo.” Mark McMinn has this sobering discovery to contribute to the conclusion of the discussion:

The sobering reality is that we cannot completely transform our clients, even with the best counseling relationships. The best we can hope for is that we initiate a spark in the process of redemption—a spark that produces the warmth of feeling loved and illuminates a future where all human liabilities will be set aside and redemption will be fully accomplished.

**Analysis and Summary**

Forgiveness is a great call given to each individual, and certainly to Christians as they live in all dimensions of life. Moreover, it is a divine requirement for spiritual, emotional, and, relational health and well-being. There are greater benefits in forgiveness than there are in harboring a spirit of unforgiveness. Decisions and actions

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60McMinn. 257.
around the forgiveness motif impact destiny in this life and the life hereafter. When synthesized, forgiveness is really a matter of personal contemplation and choice. It is encouraging, however, to know that God in Christ provided the model, means, method, and power to achieve this goal. It is up to humankind to embrace and live the freedom that forgiveness brings. The Chinese word for "crisis" comes from a compound word, "危" and "机" meaning danger and opportunity. Life is all about perspectives—"the glass full, or the glass half empty." It really depends upon how spiritual leadership and individuals desiring forgiveness see it. This study holds out the opportunity since the unforgiving person is already in a danger zone. Life can only become better by embracing the opportunity of experiencing forgiveness, and living a forgiven life.

God wants the church to be a forgiving community. The apostle Paul exhorts, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Eph 4:32 NKJV). This exhortation follows a listing of emotional reactions to offence: "bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking" (Eph 4:31 NKJV). The context of the exhortation suggests that an unforgiving Christian runs the risk of rejecting the Holy Spirit's influence upon their life. "And, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph 4:30 NKJV). Redemption is at stake in the whole forgiveness paradigm.

Typically, the Christian community focuses on, and enforces discipline for committing sins of the flesh. There is no knowledge of any church enforcing disciplinary action for sins of the spirit. The sins of the spirit include, but are not limited to the ones Paul mentions in Eph 4:31. They are all forgiveness-related issues, and will eventually keep one out of the kingdom, if allowed to go unchecked and uncorrected. Thus, the
motivation undergirding this theological perspective is more than personal and relational happiness. It is really about saving souls for the kingdom of God.

Spiritual leaders are God’s agents for effecting healing from emotional wounds. The problem is that human leadership is not sufficient to undertake the daunting task of leading change through forgiveness. The understanding that all are wounded and need healing ought to evoke thoughts resonating with that of the apostle Paul. “And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor 2:16 NKJV). It is utterly amazing how God takes frail, wounded human beings and makes them “the fragrance of Christ to their perishing fellowman (2 Cor 2:15, 16). Spiritual leadership, therefore, occupies a position of privilege, and cannot at anytime boast of having a right. The only boast spiritual leaders can have is in the cross of Christ in whose shadow they stand having themselves been forgiven. In brief, spiritual leaders would not be qualified to talk of what they have not experienced, or offer what they do not have. Forgiveness work, therefore, could be classified by the adage of “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

Having encountered the source of sustenance, and being in personal enjoyment of it, spiritual leaders can tell others where, and how to get it.

There are two things that can either be in conflict or complementary to the other. These are the professional preparation, and, the personal experience of the spiritual leader facilitating forgiveness. The assumption of the study is that spiritual leaders, acting as change agents of forgiveness, know what is to live a forgiven life. This may not necessarily be the case. Many preach and fail to practice what they preach, however, the message still blesses the listeners. The impact of the message is more forceful, however, when theory and praxis work together.
Perhaps the greatest challenge to the paradigm of forgiveness would be that of making spiritual leaders into what each may not be naturally: cognitive thinkers, storytellers, and coaches. Though these skills may not be innate for everyone, they can all be developed and mastered through practice, and over time. There are at least four ways by which the principles of this study can be applied. Through preaching, teaching, mediating, and modeling, forgiveness work is expected to be undertaken. These are ready platforms and avenues through which spiritual leadership accomplishes their work.

Imagine the impact of a well-put-together sermon on forgiveness. First, the introduction and background information about forgiveness should stimulate the cognitive thinking skills of the congregation. Their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior relating to forgiveness are challenged. Second, the body of the sermon can apply the principles of forgiveness by narrating stories. Stories could be biblical, personal, or metaphorical, highlighting benefits of forgiving or not forgiving. Finally, the preacher transitions to a coaching mode in the appeal. This is done by expressing confidence in each to forgive, and, inviting them to embrace and celebrate the experience of forgiveness. If one sermon can have an effect, how much more would a series of sermons on forgiveness?

The same can be accomplished through teaching, which pastors do in varied settings—pastor’s hour and prayer meeting are two examples of pastoral teaching forums. The preaching and teaching ideas on the paradigm in no way suggest that each would experience complete forgiveness through these means. They may be a start by turning the sod, in some, with deeper personal challenges relating to forgiveness. Preaching and teaching forgiveness can be entering wedges to the process for some who might require
mediation work. In mediation, the same steps are to be followed of thinking cognitively, working narratively, and coaching affirmatively.

The spiritual leader’s life of forgiveness, modeling the way, can have the greatest impact and influence on the congregation. Ellen White noted, “One well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.” Spiritual leaders are one step removed from losing their influence and ministry. The eyes of congregants are constantly upon them and their families, taking notice of how they live, how they relate. The challenge, therefore, is for spiritual leadership to live exemplary lives of forgiveness within their own familial relationship. Also, the church as a larger family, the macrocosm of many families, has eyes upon it too. Scripture teaches that through a loving community of believers, humanity will know who are truly Christ’s disciples (John 13:35). And, there can be no genuine love where there is no forgiveness.

The spiritual leader and the church are both under the radar to ascertain how they live forgiveness. It is, therefore, about time that the church is held accountable to practice what it preaches. The church needs to align the theory of the truth it often boasts about with praxis. In so doing, the fulfillment of the promise would be realized. “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 2 NIV). This phrase, “the soul is getting along well,” speaks to the systemic nature of being human. Often, health is equated merely with the physical well-being. Health is mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual as

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well. John's prayer suggests that prosperity will come, only as there is synergy between all the relational components of the soul. Getting along well at the personal will transmit to the relational. Humans are gregarious beings—survival depends on relationships. Living forgiveness, therefore, enhances the complexity of relationships pertaining to the individual's soul, and that with their fellow human beings. It would also facilitate true and lasting prosperity.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Forgiveness is more than a mere feeling—it is a holy principle. If forgiveness were feeling driven, self-centeredness would become the objective. Whereas there are primary benefits for the offended forgiver, Christian forgiveness ought not to be self-centered. Rather, this concept of forgiveness from the Christian perspective ought to be relationship-centered. Lewis Sperry Chafer commenting on divine forgiveness expressed, “Forgiveness is provided for them (sinners) to infinite completeness, but may be secured only as a phase of God’s whole work in salvation.”62

There is a key phrase used by Chafer—“a phase.” Even in the divine plan of restoring humanity’s broken relationship with God, there are phases—one being forgiveness. Humans tend to view and assimilate things in stages. Although God designed the perfect plan of salvation as a complete whole, divine wisdom allowed for it to unfold over time. Viewing forgiveness as one phase in the process of relationship healing and restoration is a critical component of this study. When Christians forgive, they reflect God’s graciousness in forgiving them their trespasses. Mark McMinn, a professor of Psychology and Christian counselor, has this to say on the discussion:

62Chafer, 162.
To secular psychotherapists, forgiveness may be logical, but to the Christian, forgiveness is not logical at all. Forgiveness originates in the surprise of history: the incredible, stunning, miraculous act of a divine Savior hanging on a cross and dying for sinful humans. All Christian virtue, including the capacity to forgive, emanates from this illogical event.

How Christians view and live forgiveness should not be equated in the same manner as does the secular mind. By the same token, how spiritual leaders, and counselors approach forgiveness should be reflective of Christian orientation that is vastly different from the secular mindset. Consequently, “it seems reasonable to expect that forgiveness in Christian counseling may take a different form and have results that are different from the way forgiveness is used in other forms of counseling.”

Timothy Keller describes the enormous cost of forgiveness by stating, “You have to submit to the costly suffering and death of forgiveness if there is going to be any resurrection.” This is such a profound statement. In response to an offense, the offender can either “demand the cost, share the cost, or absorb the cost.” Since Jesus is the model for Christian behavior, it is important to carefully examine how Christ handled the cost of forgiveness. Jesus did not inflict pain on sinners, but rather on the cross he took the pain, violence, and evil of the world upon himself. Such an attitudinal response to offense requires spiritual discipline and maturity that can only be developed over time with practice and divine aid.

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63 McMinn, 232.
64 Ibid., 234.
66 Ibid., 187.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the concept of forgiveness from a Christian perspective in the statement, “Forgiveness is the Christ-like suffering which it is the Christian’s duty to bear.” Bonhoeffer lived this definition of forgiveness. “His forgiveness was costly suffering, because it actually confronted the hurt and evil before him. He did not ignore or excuse sin. He resisted it head on, even though it cost him everything. His forgiveness was also costly because he refused to hate.” The real reason for offense and retaliation among humankind is sin. Timothy Keller appropriately summarizes the issue of sin and forgiveness in a reversal of divine-human roles. “The essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for us. We put ourselves where only God deserves to be; God puts himself where we deserve to be.”

The liberation that forgiveness brings is woefully low within the church congregation. There is need for this experience to be captured and shared among congregants, and, within families that comprise the church. Therefore, this study is motivated by a need to understand underlying causes of hurt, and, the withholding of forgiveness. This would necessitate studying a sample of the entire church system, with a view to realigning its parts. Prior efforts put forth to achieve forgiveness have primarily focused on the symptoms, not the root causes.

Forgiveness efforts, merely directed at treatment of affected parts of the church’s

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68 Ibid.

system, have not significantly improved the healthy functioning of the church. There still needs to be an alignment of the spiritual, emotional, and relational facets of the individual and sub-groups (cliques) within the church’s system. Though forgiveness is an individual process, the individual exists and functions in the church’s system, affects the entire system, and is in turn affected by other individuals in the church’s system. Forgiveness liberation, therefore, can become as contagious an outbreak as the current H1N1 flu, but in a positively healthy way. It can begin with one individual and have a rippling effect throughout the congregation. It would be a joy to see such an outbreak of forgiveness within the congregation. Moreover, there would be no need to come up with any vaccine to slow down and eradicate it. Such an outbreak would heal and save, in contrast to sickening and destroying the lives of mankind.

**Perturbing Systemic Status Quo**

People in general desire change regarding varied situations in their lives, but are often fearful to venture out on a new and untried path leading to the desired change. Leonard Sweet captured a change paradigm in the words, “The bend of the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make the curve.”

Many have failed in the past, and still others are failing in the present to make that forgiveness curve. The result is missing out on the exhilarating experience that lies beyond the bend. It is a faith venture that rewards the seeker when they get there.

Margaret J. Wheatley describes the paradoxes of change, stability, and renewal. One time a girl had swung and swung until finally she looped over the top. She had

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70Sweet. 94.
done what others dreamed of doing, swung so uncontrollably high that finally, not even gravity could hold her. The analogy is quite fitting. To experience the reality of change, stability, and renewal, one would need to loop over the top, breaking free from the gravitational hold of the status quo. In referencing children in a park swinging, it is true that "the very experiences these children seek are the ones adults avoid: disequilibrium, novelty, loss of control, surprise. These make for a good playground, but for a dangerous life." The point is that achieving forgiveness is not merely a fun adventure—it has its risks, challenges, and benefits.

People would obviously respond to the question of forgiveness according to their worldview or situational ethics. The real test of forgiveness comes, however, when one stands on the giving end, steering into the face of an offender. Having to make the decision to give or withhold forgiveness is the acid test. The question begs, What would you do if you came face to face with an offender who asks for your forgiveness for a crime committed against you? It would be even more challenging when the offense was based on a hate crime. Hate crimes are intentional and well-calculated against the targeted individual or group. Responses to the question would flow through lines of theologizing, moralizing, politicizing, and personalizing the hurtful offense. Forgiveness can place the seeker in a conundrum of being either condemned or applauded for their response. And yet, there is a third reaction of support for the

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72Ibid.

withholding of forgiveness. Simon Wiesenthal has the following to say on the discussion:

The world has not stopped seeing horrors that approach genocide—in Bosnia, Cambodia, China, and countless other troubled nations around the globe—as whole classes of people are targeted for extinction by criminal regimes. The events in Bosnia with all their crimes against humanity—the ethnic cleansing, the slaughtering of civilians regardless of age, the rape of Muslim women—while they do not constitute a Holocaust, repeat many of its horrors.

It is against the backdrop of such holocaustic crimes that humankind must contemplate the question of forgiveness juxtaposed to everyday personal and relational offenses. There are no easy explanations, rationale, or easy answers to forgiveness in response to ethnic cleansing or hateful crimes. And yet, the Christian is called upon to forgive even in the face of these experiences. Does this mean excusing the behavior and crimes? Of course not! The real test it would appear is in “the eating of the pudding.” Inside the born-again Christian is a reservoir of forgiveness that is seldom tapped. The resistance perhaps stems from the difficulty of bridging the gap between the past hurt, while at the same time, holding on to one’s diminished sense of self, and, the values that may have been compromised.

Contextualizing Forgiveness

Forgiveness must be understood in its context. Simon Wiesenthal argues that the crux of the matter is, of course, the question of forgiveness. Forgetting is something that time alone can take care of, but forgiveness is an act of volition and only the sufferer is qualified to make the decision. Often forgiveness gets confused with reconciliation.

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74 Wiesenthal, x-ix.
75 Ibid., 98. 99.
restoration, and forgetting of the past. It is not feasible to require or expect that some kind of amnesia-like experience would take care of offenses from the past. Humans cannot separate themselves from their past—in fact, it is their past that makes them into who they are in the present. Joseph Aponte supports the discussion:

The call to forgive may have its source in the psychological, legal or religious or a combination of all three. Freeing the heart from bitterness, resentment and vendetta is the essence of forgiveness. This however is an act of the will that chooses to release the debtor from nurturing the thoughts, emotions or actions of a victim. The person who is hurt chooses healing, and thus forgiveness, as his or her own task. It is not dependent on remorse, compensation or punishment on the part of the offender. Emotional healing and reconciliation are distinct from the moral decision to forgive.

There is a marked distinction in relationships where forgiveness is practiced. Such relationships experience hurt as all other human relationships. The difference lies in their response to the offense and hurt. Quite obviously, these are people who share a loving relationship and function based on values that they hold in common. As observed by Jun Worthington, family members cannot live together without occasionally, and perhaps often, hurting each other. What differentiates troubled and untroubled family relationships is not the presence or absence of hurts, but the willingness, even eagerness, to confess one's hurts to the person whom one offended and to forgive the offender for the hurts s/he has inflicted. Forgiveness in such relationships would not be viewed as an act—it would be viewed as a way of life. It would be more spontaneous because it is driven by an underlying governing principle of how their system operates. It is important to underscore that such groups operate within the same or similar realities of life as other

76 Aponte. 44.

groups where forgiveness is not readily practiced.

Butler, Dahlin, and Fife concur that if we are to forgive, our resentment is to be overcome, not by denying ourselves the right to the resentment, but by endeavoring to view the wrongdoer with compassion, benevolence, and love, while recognizing that she or he has willfully abandoned his or her right to them. The offended person may experience riding an emotional roller-coaster following wrongful actions against their person or property. They must not be denied this ride, neither should they be made to feel guilty by going on the ride. It just shows how humans were wired by their Creator. In spite of the dizzying emotional roller-coaster ride, the offended endeavors to focus on more the positive emotions toward the offender. This directed focus does not excuse the behavior of the offender. It simply enables an offended person to distinguish between the wrongful act and the wrong doer.

Humans learn forgiveness and it can flow through a multi-generational process of dealing with hurt. It may become necessary, therefore, to unlearn some responses to hurt and forgiveness and to replace them with new learning. This is an act of breaking the cycle or the chain that held individuals, families, and groups captive for many years.

Pollard, Anderson, Anderson, and Jennings contribute to the discussion:

Forgiveness in families is at once an interpersonal and inter-relational process. It contains elements of individual psychology as well as the broader context of one’s current family and intergenerational family. Contextual theory distinguishes the four interlocking dimensions of facts, psychology, transactions and relational ethics that form the context and dynamics of family relationships. The

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encompassing nature of contextual theory allows the differing aspects of forgiveness in families to be examined.79

Addressing the Wound

It is important that the first step of forgiveness begins with the beginning—the wound. To ignore the wound would render the offended as being in a state of denial. Denial is an age-old defense mechanism that has only proven to fail time and time again. To forgive, the offended person must face and acknowledge the wound, the hurt, and change it has brought about in their life. Worthington expressed that the need for forgiveness begins with a wound that violates physical, moral, or psychological boundaries. The wounded person then organizes their thoughts and psychological defenses to protect injured boundaries. Generally, people defend themselves by either withdrawing or attacking.80 The paradigm driving this study upholds forgiveness as a more beneficial way to govern oneself when offended.

Learning the dynamics of forgiveness for proactively responding to wounds will afford an offended better control of self. Self-governance can avoid some reactionary responses that an offended may otherwise later regret. The actions of an offended person can complicate matters and result in severe loses for both parties. A hurting wife initiated the removal of the roof from the home the couple built following infidelity on the part of the husband. Needless to say, the rest of the property was destroyed by natural elements at the time the divorce settlement was reached. What the wife benefitted from the use or


80Worthington. 64.
sale of a roof could not be compared with that of a court-ordered sale of the property or a financial settlement. Thinking and living forgiveness is an altruism that would pay dividends in the short and long term.

The family is a microcosm of the church. David Stoop and James Masteller noted. "A family is not merely a collection of separate individuals who simply happen to share the same last name and street address. It is an organism, in which the attitudes, values, and actions of each member interact with those of all other members."

It is logical to conclude, therefore, that the problems relating to forgiveness manifested among church members is a reflection of what goes on in the families comprising the church. In the effort to gain an understanding of the forgiveness issues within the church, it makes sense to seek understanding of the dynamics surrounding family hurt and forgiveness. Inferences can be drawn from the dynamics seen in the one to better understand the other. Jun Worthington contributes to the discussion by adding three established causal levels of wounds within familial relations. First, a family member may have inflicted a major grievous emotional wound on another, such as when a partner engages in an affair or a parent abuses a child physically or sexually.

Secondly, a family member may have inflicted numerous small hurts on another. Such an occurrence might happen if, after years of neglect, one partner realizes that s/he has not felt valued for years or if a child realizes that a parent was so involved in work that the parent ignored the child's years of growing up. The problem here stems from failing to value the person rather than devaluing the person.

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82 Worthington. 65.

83 Ibid.
A young man at the age of eighteen showed up for individual counseling for a sexual addiction problem that developed. The first few weeks of counseling extrapolated only symptoms of the underlying cause; however, the young man showed signs of stability while attending the weekly sessions. After traveling and returning from a two week trip, it was discovered the young man was hospitalized. After four months of institutionalized treatment, the young man was released and continued the private sessions. The therapist made an amazing discovery—the decline in health was from a feeling of abandonment by the therapists. Moreover, it was traced back to age eight when the young man’s father, who had separated from the family, made a promise that was never kept. Ten years earlier the father who had abandoned the family promised to bring pizza and never showed up. The eight-year-old child felt devalued, unloved, and unwanted by the father. Stronger attachment was made with the mother that resulted in an identity crisis through role confusion. Of course, there was a happier ending to this story, but took two years of therapeutic work to get there. This causal level of inflicting wounds is subtle and comes through transgressions of omission. David Stoop and James Masteller say, “When we talk about dysfunctional families, we mean situations in which the bonds of covenant love, especially between parents and children, have been strained or broken.” Worthington adds the third causal level of wounds: “A partner may have inflicted numerous emotional wounds on the person during an extended period of conflict, communication difficulty, erosion of intimacy and blame, or an adolescent may

\[84\text{Stoop and Masteller, 43.}\]
have heaped scorn, derision, and disrespect on his or her parent. The problem is a frequent devaluation of the family member.\textsuperscript{85}

The third level of inflicting emotional wounds occurs in abusive relationships. In response to wounds many families either do not know that they need help or know they need help and refuse to seek it. Often they live in a state of collusion and a pretense that portrays everything as being all right. The delay in getting help allows for the wound to fester and develop into pathological complexities of emotions and relations. The point to be underscored here is that most families and individuals do not seek help early enough when wounded. To procrastinate in seeking help is dangerous. It is sensible to seek help when the emotions are less likely to be a formidable challenge for the individual, family, or therapeutic process.

A classic example of delay in getting help is that of an eighty-nine year old woman who sought help forty-seven years after being raped. The help desired was to be at peace within the soul. The aged woman wanted to experience personal forgiveness, and also to forgive the transgressor who died in prison about forty-six years earlier. Two months following being helped, the woman died at peace with herself and symbolically, with the transgressor. Imagine the emotional turmoil experienced for forty-seven years. Imagine the peace that could have been experienced had help been sought forty-seven years earlier.

A major way in which wounds are inflicted is through the use of words. There is a power in words that the speaker seldom understands, or cares to understand before utterances in relationships. Many of the hurt experienced within the family and church

\textsuperscript{85}Stoop and Mastelier, 43.
congregation are driven in the vehicle called words. Often the painful actions of others in relationships hurt far less than what may be said following the behavior. Joseph Telushkin supports the discussion:

Like God, human beings also create with words. We have all had the experience of reading a novel and being moved by the fate of its characters that we felt love, hate, or anger. Sometimes we cried, even though the individual whose fate so move us never existed. All that happened was that a writer took a blank piece of paper, and through words alone created a human being so real that he or she was capable of evoking our deepest emotions.86

One of the interesting things about words is that the speaker cannot take them back, repackage, or resend. Sometimes there may be opportunity to clarify, and in many situations, the attempt to clarify complicates the issue and deepens the hurt. A couple was experiencing marital distress and sought help from their pastor. Upon making a visit to their home the husband endeavored to paint a picture as to how difficult it was to be living with such a wife. In order to paint such a graphic picture, the husband said, “I’d rather live with a dog in a dog house than with the wife!” Of course there were attempts to clarify what was meant. The explanations geared to soften and appease an angry, hurting wife complicated the matter. Needless to say, the marriage ended in separation and divorce. Joseph Telushkin makes yet another contribution to the discussion:

A man in a small European town slandered the rabbi throughout the community. One day, feeling suddenly remorseful, he begged the rabbi for forgiveness and offered to undergo penance to make amends. The rabbi told him to take a feather pillow from his home, cut it open, scatter the feathers to the wind, then return to see him. The man did as he was told, then came to the rabbi and asked, “Am I now forgiven?” “Almost,” came the response. “You just have to do one more thing. Go and gather all the feathers.” “But that’s impossible,” the man protested. “The wind has already scattered them.” “Precisely,” the rabbi answered. “And although you truly wish to

correct the evil you have done, it is as impossible to repair the damage done by your words as it is to recover the feathers.\textsuperscript{87}

Words spoken in relationships can be tantamount to murderous acts at times. The Bible issues injunctions against the use of negative words. Do not be deceived: filthy communication corrupts good habit (1 Cor 15:33). To avoid the corruption influence of words, one must guard their speech and form the right relationships. More likely than not, the intent of negative words is to denigrate and humiliate even those who share affectionate relational bonds—the family. The Bible further exhorts, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Eph 4:29 NKJV). There are noteworthy examples of those who guarded speech carefully in dealing with others. “Harry Truman might not have been the greatest intellectual ever to occupy the office of President. But in addition to his penetrating commonsense, Truman possessed kind instincts, epitomized by the extraordinary care he took not to humiliate others.”\textsuperscript{88}

It matters not how the wound was created—healing is possible for the earnest seeker. The first steps must be taken by the offended toward healing from personal and relational wounds. The requisite first-step on the part of the offended is a biblical injunction. “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone” (Matt 18:15 NKJV). The argument here is that the offended must develop the attitude to “go.” This mental accent in going functions as the fly-wheel of a motorized vehicle that turns the engine. There can be no systemic action of a vehicle

\textsuperscript{87}Telushkin, 3.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 126.
without the fly-wheel making the first turn. External force may be applied such as in the pushing of a vehicle in which the engine refuses to tumble. Experience teaches that the pushing would not be for a very long time, and the distant travel would not be as far before the pushers experience burn-out.

It is not going to be an easy first step, just as it would be a necessary first step on the part of the offended. Again, the going may not be possible or even prudent for a physical face-to-face encounter with an offended. One would have to take into consideration the nature of the offense, personal safety, and legal ramifications. However, it is possible to remotely begin ascent of the ladder of forgiveness by adopting a mental posture. It might require mustering the diminishing emotional and physical strength that remain to heal and recover from a wound. David Seamands reinforces the discussion:

The healing process must include the courage to unmask the anger, bring it before God, and put it on the cross where it belongs. There will be no healing until it is acknowledged, confronted, and resolved. Resolution means forgiving every person involved in that hurt and humiliation; it means surrendering every desire for a vindictive triumph over that person; it means allowing God's forgiving love to wash over your guilt plagued soul.89

Leadership's Therapeutic Tasks

Aponte discovered that "love and forgiveness are not words easily understandable for a therapist who must stare into the pain of the emotional wounds of clients."90 Since this study is geared toward spiritual leadership, then spirituality has to be foremost in the approach to healing the wounded. It is not uncommon for spiritual leadership to seek

89Seamands. 96.
90Aponte. 44.
secular tools and methods in attempts to heal spiritual problems. They may do this at the expense of neglecting the most effective method and approach. When an individual is broken in their emotions, it is said that their spirit is broken. The emotions are intertwined with the spirit of an individual and can be regarded as being one and the same thing. In response to his heinous acts, the Psalmist David expressed: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Ps 51:17 NKJV). David’s broken spirit resulted from high emotionally charged elements of guilt and sorrow. Joseph Aponte supports the discussion:

The spiritual act of forgiveness, based on love, can seem distant from the reality of the deep and lasting effects of abuse, betrayal and abandonment. Yet, if the spiritual cannot lift us out of the despair and bitterness of everyday life, what does it mean? Is it not the spiritual that transcends our everyday pain, needs and passions? Does not the spiritual thereby give us the freedom to see over our emotions and act as the people we wish to be? It is however important that the therapist acknowledge that regardless of his or her beliefs about love and forgiveness, clients come with their own spirituality, and they need to be received as they are.91

To accomplish meaningful and effective work with individuals who are seeking forgiveness, leadership must be prepared. Fumbling and stumbling for the next step in working with individuals can have serious repercussions on the outcome. Having a step-by-step map will prove to be beneficial to the leader and the person being helped. It would be remiss if the leader were to approach the work of forgiveness from a hit-and-miss standpoint. It is more likely that leadership would miss rather than hit with such an unprepared approach to forgiveness work. F. DiBlasio and J. Proctor make this significant contribution to the discussion:

Though the majority of therapists they studied had a favorable impression of forgiveness, they reported a “deficit in the theoretical application of forgiveness techniques to their practices.” If therapists do not have well-articulated models of

91Aponte. 44.
forgiveness at their disposal, they may be equally unprepared to articulate its process in therapy. Lay understanding of forgiveness may vary even more widely. Combined therapist-client confusion regarding forgiveness may handicap its acceptability as a therapy intervention, even where the presence of a significant betrayal seems to recommend it.92

In traveling to a strange city, a road map will prove to be very helpful. The technology of the day has gone beyond the road map by building global positioning systems (GPS) into vehicles. The intent is to get the traveler to their destination without the distress of losing their way. It is quite a frustrating thing to lose one's way. Anxious fear grips the soul while time needed to accomplish important tasks slip away. Danger can be brought to self and others by winding up in an unfamiliar and insecure place unintentionally. So leadership must know where they are when undertaking forgiveness work. The individual who desires to embark upon the journey of forgiveness would be blindsided to the processes involved. As part of their professional responsibility leadership's role would be to act as a guide to the blind. In this relationship, somebody has to be able to see clearly the pathway to the preferred destination. The Bible warns, "If the blind leads the blind both will fall into a ditch" (Matt 15:14 NKJV). What leadership should not want to do is ditch self and their dependant. Jun Worthington contributes three broad tasks for undertaking therapeutic responsibility with a forgiveness seeker to the discussion:

Firstly, induce family members to empathically understand matters from each other's perspective. Secondly help each family member involved in the unforgiveness to see that she is equally needy, wants forgiveness for his or her own misdeeds, and in humility wants to extend forgiveness to the offending family member. Thirdly promote an overt expression of forgiveness or vulnerability.93

93Worthington, 65.
This broad outline establishes the perimeters for the work the leader sets out to accomplish. Working with the end in mind from the very beginning allows the leader to constantly be in view of the whole picture. The individual being helped is but one tree in the entire forest of their relationships. Often when people are emotionally wounded their significant-other relationships are affected as well. This is so because of the dynamic and systemic nature of human relations. That is why leadership must be able to see the big picture as to the healthy functioning of the offended person within their microcosmic, as well as the macrocosmic feedback loops. As they return from the therapeutic encounter, what would the other voices in their lives be saying? What would they be doing? The offense an individual experienced is often exacerbated by the indirectly affected relationship they share. Leadership must be cognizant of the level of work needed and take action accordingly. Jun Worthington makes yet another contribution to the discussion:

In individual treatment, we begin by examining the hurt. In family therapy, though, the focus is more diffuse. Therapists need to attend simultaneously to the presenting concern, patterns of communication, conflict and intimacy, attributions of blame, description of hurtfulness, and other variables that are theoretically important to treating the family. Whereas in individual oriented therapies, the raw material is usually a past hurt, in family therapy, the therapist has three sources of information: reports of past hurts, ongoing daily hurtfulness, and hurtfulness that might occur during therapy session—when both members of the dyad attend.⁹⁴

Rationale for Forgiveness and Its Therapeutic Acceptability

The motivation to forgive may be influence by functional or dysfunctional factors. Some individuals attempt forgiveness to hold on to a relationship that they fear losing.

⁹⁴Worthington, 67.
They may have either been too emotionally attached, or too dependent on the offender in one way or another. In such cases the offended dreads the pain of separation more than a destructive relationship. The pain of separating from the offender might appear to be worse than the offense itself. Some may attempt to forgive because of fear relating to legal implications of an offense. In such instances there is a collusion resulting in a façade of forgiveness and reconciliation. Still there are others who cannot fathom the thought of losing their status in a circle of friendship. Failure to covertly express forgiveness might mean facing the wrath of others in the relationship circle and the threat of being cut off from the group. Forgiveness should be approached from a non-deficit point of view. If it does not promote healthy functioning—the approach should be avoided. “Forgiving for the wrong reasons, such as to hold on to a destructive relationship will be just as damaging as not forgiving.”

The work of forgiveness is about the person needing and seeking help. However, great effort should be made in exploring motivation to forgive on the part of leadership. What the individual and the leader are hoping to accomplish should be synthesized, agreed upon, and clearly expressed. “Poor articulation could lead to ambiguity, confusion, or outright misrepresentation of forgiveness to clients as a possible therapy intervention, making it less acceptable.” Conflict regarding rationale and the process of forgiveness between the leader and the person being helped must be avoided. This is crucial in that “confusion or inarticulate rationalization of forgiveness may lead to ambivalence on the part of clients, whereupon the therapist may determine that

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95 Aponte. 41.
96 Butler, Dhalin, and Fife. 287.
forgiveness intervention should be set aside, viewing the client as disinterested or unprepared for forgiveness work. “It may be narrowed down to the dotting of “Is” and crossing of “Ts” the definition and specific wording of forgiveness in therapy may be critical.” It cannot be over emphasized that a clearly defined and articulated rationale and process for achieving forgiveness should be established up front. This really is a part of leadership’s responsibility and integrity.

If leadership is deficient in their understanding and rationale of forgiveness the whole process can be skewed. “A therapist must have an adequate definition of interpersonal forgiveness before introducing the topic to clients since there are different ways in which forgiveness has been misconstrued.” The use of mirroring techniques would help leadership facilitate the individual being helped in arriving at the correct meaning and rationale of forgiveness. Did I hear you say...; or what I heard you say...; or did I get it right? The goal of mirroring is to pull from the individual’s latent meaning and understanding for pursuing their goal of forgiveness. “Many people have a difficult time forgiving because they learned and experienced ineffective notions of what it means to forgive. Many misconceptions of forgiveness appear to relate to its association with relationship reconciliation, pardoning, or condoning.” The concept of forgiveness and desire to live it is noble and worthy of commendation. However, it requires time and

97 Butler, Dahlin, and Fife. 287.

98 Ibid.


effort to get it right because of the bewildering odds of the negative emotions that may be concealed inside the offended. Getting it right should therefore be the overarching principle, as opposed to getting it done. The rightness of the process will be determined by the meaning and understanding generated at the beginning.

Often forgiveness becomes confused with reconciliation and the two are mutually exclusive processes. They may appear to have occurred in simultaneous settings of past experience; but that is just what it was—an appearance. The offended person has to process so much pent-up emotions and toss them out before reaching forgiveness, let alone reconciliation. There are experiences of hurt that might render two people as being irreconcilable. And yet, persons from such irreconcilable relationships can achieve forgiveness and live a forgiven life. The school of thought influencing leadership’s belief impact their work and outcome of forgiveness. Each school of thought would obviously have a different outcome. Butler, Dhalin, and Fife contribute to the discussion:

There are three schools of thought on the subject of reconciliation and forgiveness. 1. Some authors believe that reconciliation and forgiveness are inseparably bounded to each other. 2. There are others who assert that forgiveness and reconciliation are distinct and independent actions. 3. A third group believes that reconciliation is the offender’s responsibility and occurs when the offender recognizes his or her wrong and takes actions to correct the offending behavior.

This study favors the second school of thought on forgiveness. From a Christian perspective, humanity was forgiven by God thousands of years before reconciliation took place. The divine model shows God—the offended reaching out to humankind—the offender. Further, having been reconciled by the blood of Christ humankind, still awaits the reality of living with God in His kingdom. There are two points to be understood

Butler. Dhalin and Fife. 287.
here: (1) forgiveness ought to precede reconciliation, and (2) reconciliation may be a longer, drawn-out process, if it is at all possible. The argument does not negate the fact that some reconciliation can occur at a much faster pace. The idea is that leadership should not rush to a reconciliation to be able to affirm that forgiveness has been achieved.

“Reconciliation is distinct from the moral decision to forgive. The choice to forgive only opens the door to reconciliation, if safe, prudent, and right. The spiritual will to forgive frees us to do the emotional work of forgiving, on the one hand while, the ability to act more freely follows on the other hand.”102 The tokenism gestures of hand shaking, hugs, and kisses do not necessarily guarantee forgiveness. “Forgiveness takes place when the offended gives up feelings of hatred or resentment.”103

Another important point of consideration is that the offender has a significant part to play in reaching this goal of being reconciled. Much focus is usually placed on the offended and rightly so because they hold “the domino stick” that can break the “grid lock,” and create movement on the forgiveness board. This however does not preclude the offended from undertaking the work they must do before reconciliation takes place. In addition the offended should not soften the pain the offender feels nor smooth the path to reconciliation. Doing so can short-circuit the learning that should be reinforced through the offended’s work and steps leading to reconciliation.

A wife married less than one month came home from work one day and found the husband in the marital bed with another woman. The wife made a number of calls

102 Aponte. 44.

venting the hurt felt from the experience and left the husband the next day. Within three weeks the wife returned and announced to the husband that the wrong was forgiven. The wife followed through the statement of forgiveness by moving back into the couple’s home. For the next seven years they experienced numerous bouts of separation and reconciliation. While their intentions were perhaps good and motives pure, they failed to undertake the important task of working through forgiveness. Reconciliation was as a bandage placed over the wound. The wound continued to fester and ooze intermittently renewing the pain from the hurt. There is no quick fix to deep emotional wounds—especially when it comes to reconciliation. "Because flashbacks are so common following an affair and can interfere with recovery, it’s important for you and your partner to try to understand how they came about and develop plans for coping with them." Of course, this understanding would be best achieved by working through the hurt from the affair with professional help. Freedman and Enright make yet another contribution to the discussion, followed by an outline of the steps in a process intervention with incest survivors:

Forgiveness, condoning, and excusing are sometimes confused as well. In forgiving, the offended realizes that an offender has committed a serious wrong. The offer of lowered resentment and increased compassion are given nonetheless. In condoning, the offended comes to believe that there was no real injury in the first place. Forgiveness is at times equated with reconciliation, which is a misunderstanding of both constructs. In forgiving, the injured party may give up the qualities of resentment or even hatred but not necessarily enter into relation with an un-trusted offender. In reconciliation, the offender realizes his or her own wrong and takes steps to correct this behavior before the two enter once again into a relationship.
The study conducted by Freedam and Enright found forgiveness intervention for female incest survivors to be effective. The intervention was reported successful in its goal of promoting forgiveness. The participants sampled from the population studied also showed increasing psychological well-being. The study revealed higher self-esteem and hope, and lowered depression and anxiety. These were reported by the women following participation in the intervention. Also, a potentially important finding concerns the pattern of change in forgiveness toward the abuser. Before the forgiveness intervention, the groups studied presented a picture of unforgiveness. After participation in the intervention, both experimental groups showed stronger forgiveness, not only on the overall scale, but also within the following subscales: subtraction of negative behavior and judgments, and addition of positive affect and cognitions toward the injurer. The intervention, in other words, had an effect on all psychological systems of affect, cognition, and behavior toward the perpetrator. The intervention process is outlined in Table 1.

**Implications of Forgiveness for Health and Well-being**

Humans have the tendency to view things in sections. Often, little or no attention is given to the relationship of the sectional realities and experiences of everyday living. The influence of seeing things in parts may have resulted from mankind’s civilized ways of living. The place humans are born into called home is sectioned into the varied rooms where different living experiences occur. Human beings at immediate birth are influenced to compartmentalize the realities of the world. While nothing may be

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\[6^{106}\] Freedman and Enright, 988.
Table 1. Psychological variables engaged in a process intervention on forgiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Examination of psychological defenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Confrontation of anger; the point is to release, not harbor, the anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Admittance of shame and guilt, when this is appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Awareness of cathexis (the attaching of an excessive amount of emotional energy to the hurtful event, and spending much time replaying the events of the injury in one's mind)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Awareness of cognitive rehearsal of the offence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Insight that the injured party may be comparing self with the injurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Insight into a possibly altered “just world view”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A change of heart-conversion-new insights that old resolution strategies are not working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Commitment to forgive the offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Reframing, through role taking, who the wrongdoer is by viewing him or her in context</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Empathy toward the offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Awareness of compassion, as it emerges, toward the offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Acceptance, absorption of the pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Realization that self has needed other's forgiveness in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Realization that self has been, perhaps, permanently changed by the injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Awareness of decreased negative affect and perhaps, increased positive affect, if this begins to emerge, toward the injurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Awareness of internal, emotional release</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

necessarily wrong with sectional perspectives of life—the problem comes when humanity neglects to recognize the sectional relationships that exist.

Ironically, the rooms of a home share a latent relationship in one way or another. Take for example the way the various rooms are connected around food. Food is prepared in the kitchen, eaten in the dining room, digested in the living room, assimilated in the bedroom, and bulk waste excreted in the bathroom. Imagine what a despicable condition it would be for humanity to have all the experiences related to food in one
room. It of course would reduce people to the lower forms of creature life—forms that apparently view and relate to the world as a singular whole. The bizarre illustration of the relationships between the rooms of a home ought to engender critical thinking. Think for example about the relationship existing with the soul of human beings. What is the connection between the body, mind, and spirit of humans? Does the mental impact the physical, and the physical the spiritual, and vice versa? Ellen White has this to say:

The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death.107

Since the mental and physical functioning of humanity is interrelated and affects the other, it would make sense to view them in whole than in mere parts. The whole puzzle presents a picture that is seen as the physical, mental, and spiritual parts of humanity that are connected. When well-being is viewed as more than the mere healthier functioning of organs and limbs of the body—the puzzle has begun to tell the story. Well-being necessitates that the mind and body both function well. People that develop mental illnesses lose the ability to function as they normally did in some physical ways. Care-giving becomes necessary to enhance physical function that becomes impaired by a decline in mental health. It can be deduced therefore, that an unforgiving spirit, being a mental state, could have debilitating effects on the body’s physical functioning.

An unforgiving spirit resulting from a hurt gets powered by anger, hostility, resentment, withdrawal, or aggression. These emotions trigger bodily responses. “When

the immune system gets out of balance and overreacts to exogenous agents, it is highly probable that the body will react by developing an allergy. If however the immune system under-reacts to outside or exogenous agents, the reaction of the body is likely to be the development of a severe chronic infection. In reflecting on the impact of overacting or under-reacting to exogenous agents, humans "choose their poison," which in either case affects the body. It is heart-warming to think, however, that humans are also in the position to choose their cure in emotionally unbalancing experiences. The choice is always left with the offended person to decide how they would be affected by the experience. The length of time, degree, and frequency of experiencing and reacting to emotional wounds would undoubtedly impact the physical affect that may result.

One may argue that they have had forgiveness issues for many years and it did not have any impact on their physical functioning. By the same token, one can argue the same for cigarette smoking, having done so for sixty or seventy years and never developing cancer. The question begs, Does that make holding a grudge a safe thing to do? Just as, Does having no cancer in a lifetime smoker makes cigarette smoking safe? There is always the rule of odds, which has no telling what impact a situation that one escaped will have upon another.

Perhaps the overarching question that needs to be considered, Is it worth it to take the risk? Whereas some people learn from others' experience—others like to learn from their own experience. In certain situations, experience can be the greatest teacher—in others surely it is wisdom. Wisdom involves following counsel or a course of action

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known to avert danger. Don Colbert reports findings that “through the years we
physicians have frequently seen patients go through emotionally devastating experiences
such as divorce, bankruptcy, or death of a child—only to see those patients experience
heart attacks, recurrences of cancer, autoimmune disease, or serious crippling or disabling
conditions.” There is no telling how many people may have recovered from physical
illnesses had they released themselves and their transgressor, following an offense, by
forgiving. “When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery
inside your soul.” It is tantamount to removing a malignant tumor that disguises in
organs, lymph nodes, and blood vessels waiting an opportune time to launch its brutal
attack upon its victim.

Analysis and Summary

The study of forgiveness is a very involved and complex topic. No single treatise
of the topic can adequately deal with all the nuances pertaining to this concept. In fact,
the more studies are done, the more questions have been raised. And yet, there remain
unanswered questions even following this study. Aponte raised a number of these
questions beginning with, is it good for a patient’s mental health to forgive? Indeed, this
question was not an issue in most of the Western society. The reason is because there
was a strong influence of the Judeo-Christian religious legacy. Forgiveness was accepted
as a moral ideal. There is the need for a return to primitive morality. The church today

109Don Colbert. 4.
110Lewis B. Smedes. Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurt We Don’t Deserve (New York: Simon
and Schuster, 1984). 44.
111Aponte. 39.
is far removed from morality, compared to earlier Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices of this virtue. This study calls for a return to the old practices, regarding the concept of forgiveness.

Secularism and postmodernism have replaced the Judeo-Christian influence. Society is re-examining virtually all traditional moral assumptions allowing for subjectivity of personal experience and reason. Therapeutic professionals continue to struggle with the thought of a victim of sexual abuse forgiving the perpetrator. The question of marital infidelity constantly challenges the bedrock of society—the family. Should the partner of an unfaithful spouse forgive the affair? This question becomes more challenging when there is the lifelong reminder of a child that changes the family system. Moreover, when the infidelity transmits the life threatening disease HIV/AIDS, is it feasible for the innocent partner to forgive?

Divorce rate is at an alarming 60% in America and the church is not exempted from this statistic. Parents struggle as to what to do with a drug addicted and kleptomaniac son or daughter who disgraces and distresses the family. Should they receive forgiveness and be allowed to remain in the family? Is forgiveness ideal for every situation? Are there conditions in which forgiveness is not advisable? Lots of time can be spent debating the validity and implications of each of these questions. However, "forgiveness is an interpersonal transaction in which a forgiver chooses to abandon his or her right to retaliate against or withdraw emotionally from an offender after an offence. Forgiveness is not forgetting, nor is it condoning; nor is it re-establishing justice or moral balance; nor is it reconciliation."\(^{112}\)

\[^{112}\text{Worthington. 60.}\]
Aponte, Wiesenthal, Worthington, Freedman, and Enright, all renowned researchers on the subject of forgiveness, agree that forgiveness is distinct from other related processes. Systematic theologian Chafer also views forgiveness as one phase of the complete divine plan of salvation. The opinion of this study resonates with the distinction of forgiveness being separate from other processes. Augsburger, also an authority on the subject, differs in viewpoint, highlighting the relational component. Forgiveness cannot be achieved personally in some private fashion. “It is addressing the actual interactions between offended people”113 The question begs regarding situations where two people in an offense are never to meet, let alone, relate again. Take for instance, a person who murdered another and will never have the opportunity of relating again in this life. Is Augsburger advocating that such a person cannot achieve forgiveness? God forbid such a notion. Augsburger says, “We are not even beginning the process of forgiving and being forgiven until we take the first steps in attempting to restore, reconstruct, and rediscover a relationship.”114 While reconciliation is the ideal to forgiveness, it may not necessarily be the first step. There are relationships that may have become so unhealthy that reconciliation and rediscovery may be very risky. Yet, it is believed that the individuals involved in relationship hurt can find forgiveness and move on with their lives together or apart. Usage of the Greek translation of forgiveness to establish the point of “releasing” or “setting free” was not applied accurately.

There are two key words used in the Greek for forgive, forgave, or forgiveness. The first, aphieimi, means to remit or forgive debts or sins, and carries more of a vicarious

113 Augsburger, 24.

114 Ibid.
removal of the cause of offense. It is used more in reference to the atoning sacrifice of Christ on behalf of the sinner. However, there are conditions to this forgiveness—the offender must repent and make confession. Then, the offended graciously restores the broken relationship. The second word is charizomai, meaning to bestow a favor unconditionally whether at the divine-human, or human-human levels of relationships.\textsuperscript{115} The first apphiemi word is used more in the Gospels with references to Christ's work of forgiveness for sinners. It also highlights human forgiveness as being strictly analogous to God's forgiveness.

When the apostle Paul talked about forgiveness the word charizomai was used in all but one verse in the epistles. In Rom 4:7 Paul introduced the word apoluo which means "to let loose from" or "to release." This is the only time Paul used this expression, and the context clearly speaks to setting an offender free from quasi-judicial acts.\textsuperscript{116} The releasing in this context does not mean to forgive. A criminal could be released not because they were forgiven per se. Criminals are released for reasons, such as a weak plaintiff's argument, lack of convincing evidence, or conflicting statements. That does not mean they were forgiven. The defense's case may be presented stronger than the plaintiff's and the offender gets released.

The unconditional nature of charizomai suggests that an offended can forgive, period. This could also mean without desiring immediate or even future restoration or reconstruction of the damaged relationship. To stipulate restoration, reconstruction, and


\textsuperscript{116}Ibid.
rediscovery as necessary first steps diminishes the unconditional nature of forgiveness. If feasible, the reconciliation and reconstruction of damaged relationships could be more effective when the offended comes to terms with the self following the offense. This study does not rule out reconciliation and rediscovery because biblical forgiveness requires the same. The argument is against making reconciliation and rediscovery mandatory first steps.

King David achieved forgiveness for heinous crimes that could not be addressed relationally. Unequivocally, there would have been relational overtures had King David the opportunity to do so. The fact remains that achieving personal forgiveness resulted from King David’s contrition before God. This study encountered individuals who desired forgiveness but the relational counterpart in the offense is either dead or whereabouts unknown. These are individuals who sit on pews week after week, hoping against hope, to be freed from the guilt of past offenses.

There is a difference between the end of forgiving and the means of forgiving. Much of the confusion that exists around the forgiveness concept has to do with a tug-of-war between means and ends. This study in no way rules out the relational factor of forgiveness. The question that needs to be addressed is, which comes first, "the chicken" or "the egg?" Much of the forgiveness literature agrees for the most part except on this one—the personal versus the relational. Are they separate entities or simultaneous requirements of forgiveness? Is the relational factor always feasible and possible? As justification sets the sinner free to relate to God on the divine-human level, forgiveness sets the offended free to relate to the offender on the human-human level. Both acts are initially personal, but, they open up enormous potential for ongoing relationships. The
ongoing aspect of justification is called sanctification. For forgiveness, it encompasses the relational. The difference between the two, however, is that the human-human level continues to dwell in imperfection. Human-human relationships can become jaded from offenses that challenge effective reconciliatory relations.

At a recent funeral conducted, it was observed that the surviving relatives present needed to experience cathexis. During the open reflections, one after another from the deceased family came to the podium. They each made tearful confessions, following which they kissed the dead and returned to their seat. The eulogy had to be changed into a forgiveness-focused presentation. They would never be able to relate to the deceased loved one again. Each left the funeral confessing that they felt better and more hopeful of achieving forgiveness. There were obviously other relationship things that needed to be worked out among the surviving family members—perhaps with mediation. However, the immediate need in that funeral service was the achieving of personal forgiveness.

The Scripture acknowledges that the relational factor will not always be possible at the human-human level on the continuum of forgiveness. "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom 12:18 NIV). There is a level of responsibility that both the offended and offender have in effecting human-human relationship. Since one does not have control over the other, forgiveness has to be a personal, distinct, and separate task from reconciliatory relations. Lewis Smedes ties it nicely together by acknowledging that "forgiveness is an honest release even though it is done invisibly, within the forgiver's heart. It is honest because it happens along with honest judgment, honest pain, and honest hate. True forgivers do not pretend they don't
Forgiveness’ primary benefit is for the offended—the means. There are a whole lot of personal and internal processes that must occur in the means phase of forgiveness. The offended must experience a second-order change during this phase. This is where they develop a new meaning to the pain and suffering from the wound. It is during this phase that the offended develops feelings of benevolence toward the offender. What is done following this new meaning constitutes the ends of forgiveness. Upon completion of the means phase, it may be deemed prudent to reconcile or not be reconciled; seek justice, or not seek justice. In the religious community, too much focus is placed on an immediate bringing of the two parties together in reconciliatory gestures. This is often done at the expense of the personal and private forgiveness processes that need to take place. Circumventing this process would preempt the goal of achieving genuine forgiveness.

There is also a challenge with the forgetting of a wound. There is no amnesia-like experience that takes place following which the offense is completely erased from the hard-drive—the human brain. In fact, it would appear that God really wants humankind to remember offenses as a way to evoke lifelong gratitude and benevolence. There needs to be gratitude from the offender and benevolence from the offended in an ongoing fashion. This study would describe forgetting, therefore, as a therapeutic means of an offended making a significant decision. The decision is not to allow the offense to affect them personally, and perhaps, relationally any longer. They are releasing the negative emotions that held them captive. Throughout eternity, Jesus will bear the marks of the

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"Smede. 47."
nail-scared hands. Forever, the beneficiaries of God's forgiveness and benevolent grace would show gratitude by the signs of remembering. There is great value in remembering from a positive effects point-of-view, thus, it should not be discouraged. The cathexis-type of reliving of the offence is the unhealthy remembering that should be discouraged. Though this does have some therapeutic value, it can become worse than the offense itself if done unsupervised and uncontrolled.

A major agreement of the forgiveness literature is on the implications to healthy functioning. There is evidence to substantiate increased mental and emotional disorders related to an unforgiving spirit. Conversely, achieving forgiveness showed evidence to substantiate healthier functioning mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The liberating experience of forgiveness comes through the God-given power of choice. No one should be coerced to forgive or not to forgive. Freedman and Enright found that the gist of criticism regarding forgiveness intervention stems from the notion that it perpetuates abuse. When people realize that one may forgive without reconciling, the argument loses weight.\textsuperscript{118} There was so much new learning from the review of the literature, and yet, there is still much more to learn. Further study needs to be done on the subject, especially on the issue relating to the reconciliatory and relational aspects of forgiveness.

\textsuperscript{118}Freedman and Enright, 983.
CHAPTER 4

THE RESEARCH AND ANALYSES

Overview

The study examined how people in a church setting respond to forgiveness. Do they readily forgive when offended? Do they find it difficult to forgive? I endeavored to find out how belief relating to spirituality impacts forgiveness. The participants were people who read the Bible, attend church, claim to be Christian, and engage in varied ministries of the church. The participants heard and experienced many lessons on forgiveness through sermons, Bible studies, personal devotion, and interaction with other Christians. I wanted to find out how the belief of church members impact forgiveness. Further, I endeavored to gain an understanding as to how the faith community impacts the way individual members process forgiveness.

The nature of the church is such that females have always shown ready support and enthusiasm to participate in relationship programs. In contrast, however, males have shown less support and enthusiasm for participation in relationship programs. The study has apparently made a break-through, in that a significant percentage of males voluntarily participated. Most of the forgiveness-related concerns that I dealt with prior to the study involved female struggles with living forgiveness. The male participation balanced the perspective on forgiveness experiences within the congregation. Figure 1 shows the percentage of males to females who participated.
The ratio of females to males reflects the gender demography of the church congregation. It is important that this distinction be made in the study because of a perception that percolates within the congregation. There is an often stated perception and belief that the females of the congregation are hurting. Moreover, it is purported that males of the congregation are responsible for many of the hurts experienced by females. While it may have some validity, the finding of this study is that males are also hurting, and are struggling with forgiveness issues as well. The gender response to this study presents a balanced perspective. Contrary to expectations, males did not conceal their emotions in order to appear macho. A significant representation—33%—of participants in the study were men who completed, and returned their questionnaire.

The goal of this study was not to find a "scape goat" to blame for gender-related issues of hurt. Rather, it is the intent of the study to facilitate all members within the congregation to move past their hurt by achieving forgiveness. It appears that in a given
safe environment, men as well as women, are willing to admit hurt, and personal and relational struggles with forgiveness. Further, it appears that congregants are poised to work toward achieving the freedom of forgiveness and living a forgiven life.

Since the goal of this study is to seek greater understanding of relationship hurt, it is important to consider the relationship status of the sample in the study. This might offer clues as to where hurt is generated. It may be that some of the relationship issues within the congregation are triggered by displacement and projection behaviors. Often the hurt that individuals experience, come from their close loved ones and those they relate to on a continual basis. The relationship status of the participants in the study appears in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Relationship status.
There were more married people (45%) participating in the study. This could be because of one or a combination of three factors. It could be that, perhaps, they are hurting in their relationship. It could also be that they entered the marriage with unresolved hurt. It could be that they were hurt by someone other than their spouse. A statistically significant number of single individuals (34%) participated in the study. These are persons who have never been married, but are hurting and struggling with forgiveness as well. The divorced group (13%) was a much smaller sample; however, they were significant as they offered clues to prior marital conflict that created the hurt. A small number of the participants were widowed (6%), and a much smaller number were separated from their spouse (2%).

One of the clear indications of Figure 2 is that some people are hurting in certain aspects of relationship. Individuals within the congregation are struggling with forgiveness issues at every level of the relationship continuum. One area of relationship may draw more attention because of the high percentage of hurting and struggling with forgiveness issues. However, great care would need to be exercised in paying attention to “the big picture” while at the same time not neglecting the smaller matters of hurt. For example, the separated though still married may appear so infinitesimal (2%), yet this group finds themselves in the single parent category while still being married. Along with the marital hurt leading to separation, they may struggle with loss of income and status, on the one hand; while there is an increase of function—duplicity parental role on the other hand. That may be a very painful experience. Each category should be able to find the spiritual and emotional help needed to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Figure 3 shows the relationship producing offense. It appears that there is a connection
between Figure 2, showing marital status, and Figure 3, showing the person who created the hurt.

**RELATIONSHIP PRODUCING OFFENSE**

![Bar chart showing relationship producing offense](chart.png)

Figure 3. Relationship producing offense.

An analysis of Figure 3 shows that 29% of study participants have experienced or are experiencing hurt with their marriage. This may be related to the 13% divorced individuals who may have been hurt in their marriage that resulted in divorce. Between close friendships and other relationships, 34% of the participants experienced hurt. A significant 15% of participants experienced family-related hurt. A combined 14% have experienced hurt by their parents. An astounding combined 58% of all the hurt generates from within familial relationships. It can be deduced, therefore, that the relationship hurt experienced with the congregation is a reflection of the hurt experienced within the family. Dysfunction in the family results in dysfunction within the church. Alongside
the work being done with hurting members who may seek help, there is urgent need for proactive programs geared to minimizing and preventing hurt within the family.

Though a small number (4%) experienced hurt from a date, this is an area that cannot be overlooked. Some of the concerns around this area of hurt include, but are not limited to, betrayal and date rape. Affected individuals not only struggle with forgiving, they also experience difficulty dating. Further, this group is caught between two extremes: (1) they may avoid dating and forming lasting relationships, and (2) they may make poor decisions driven by repetitive compulsive disorder. There is yet another similar number (4%) affected by a partner. In the context of the congregation, there are young adults who are in college and survive in the expensive city by sharing with a roommate. There are others who being entrepreneurial entered into a business relationship with a church member(s) that turned sour. The severity of the offense experienced by participants is shown in the Figure 4.

Figure 4. Severity of the offense.
Among the study sample 23% have experienced small offenses. This means that their offender said foolish, hurtful things that irritated. The offenders consistently made such congregants uncomfortable whenever they were together. Another 29% of congregants have experienced large offenses. This means that they were repeatedly neglected by the same person who committed to do something for them. What was even more painful, they may know of other individuals who experienced the same at the hands of the very person who offended them. A larger cross-section, 31% of the participants, experienced huge offenses. A huge offense involved behaviors such as marital infidelity. The third party may have been a trusted friend who becomes angry at the innocent partner, who finds out the secret affair. A small number of participants experienced colossal offenses. Though this group represents a smaller cross-section of the congregation, the stakes are high. It means that these individuals or someone close in relationship to them, experienced severe physical pain, or death, at the hands of their offender.

Some 6% of the study sample experienced medium offenses. An example of a medium offense is manifested by someone who committed to share expenses for a joint venture or item, but instead spends the money on something else. This means that the other party was placed in a financial bind. Credit was at stake, eviction became imminent, and loss of the cherished item was inevitable. A very small 2% of the participants experienced tiny offenses. A tiny offense is defined as breaking a plan in favor of doing the same or similar thing with someone else. These injurious behaviors have challenged members of the congregation with forgiveness issues. Some have tried forgiveness, others avoidance and punishment, as shown in Table 2.

104
Table 2. Understanding underlying forgiveness issues

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<tr>
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<th>MC AVOIDANCE</th>
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<th>H FEELING CLOSE</th>
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Statistical Package: The data was analyzed using SPSS. Abbreviations: MC-Avoidance and Revenge, measures of Michael MCCullough's instrument; H-distancing and Feeling Close of Jon A. Hess's instrument. JA 1-17. variables measuring spirituality developed by researcher Ainsworth Joseph. P-Values:* = < .05. ** = < .01. *** = < .001

Method

Inter correlation matrix was assembled for all the variables in the study. Among the variables, many of them showed very low correlations. Some of the variables had significant correlations. JA 1 belief with revenge r = .039; JA 2 attitude with revenge r = .071; JA 3 attitude with avoidance r = .078; JA 4 attitude with avoidance r = .041, distancing r = .057, and feeling close r = .093; JA 5 attitude with avoidance r = .085; JA 7 with avoidance r = .027, and revenge r = .016; JA 9 attitude with distancing r = .031; JA
The correlation of belief and attitude with avoidance talk, revenge, distancing, and feeling close imply: 1. correct belief might encourage an offended to be close again with transgressor, and perhaps church congregation respectively. 2. Faulty belief might trigger an offended to avoid talking with transgressor and church congregation about hurt. The offended might seek revenge, and distance self from the offender and church congregation also.

The correlation of attitude with avoidance talk, revenge, distancing, and feeling close imply: 1. demonstration of understanding and support by the church community might inspire an offended to remain or pursue being close again with the offender. 2. Demonstration of a lack of understanding and support by the church community might push an offended to avoid talking about offense, seek revenge, and distance self from transgressor and church congregation.

The study examined forgiveness and its effects on close personal relationships. The participants were members from the church congregation (15 males and 29 females, and 4 were unidentified by gender. The age range was between thirty-one to fifty-five years with the mean age = 43 years, SD = 12). There was no incentive or reward for members' participation. The targeted number of participants was 100, which represented 10 percent of the congregation. An open invitation was extended to the congregation and 87 volunteers enrolled in the study. The research instrument contained 76 variables.
encompassing four areas of investigation. Standardized measures were used: Yelsma, 38 variables measuring communication of forgiveness; McCullough, 12 variables measuring transgression strategies; and Hess, 8 variables measuring relationship distance index. The other 17 variables measuring spirituality and forgiveness were designed to meet the context and purpose of this study. The 17 variables were reviewed and validated by Dr. Joan D. Atwood as a check and balance to personal biases.

The instrument was distributed in a return-address postage paid envelope. The number of instruments returned was 49. One instrument was omitted from the study due to missing data. With a mortality rate of 44%, the study is, therefore, based on a sample of 48 participants from the church population. The following hypotheses undergirded the investigation: (1) spiritual belief enables or disables offended members in the pursuit of forgiveness; (2) the perception of offended members regarding attitude of the church community affects their process and outcome of forgiveness; and (3) forgiveness, a spiritual discipline, exercised in a spiritual community should present less challenges. The study investigated communication of forgiveness, transgression strategies, and relationship distance index against the backdrop of spirituality.

**Correlations**

For a complete documentation of the correlations and variables, please see Appendix E.

**Hypothesis 1**

The spiritual belief of members regarding the virtue of forgiveness was related to variables of avoidance talk, revenge, distancing, and feeling close. It appears that members may elect to pray about their experience and leave matters in God’s hands, hope
for a better future, live under crushing guilt, self-blame and perform over-compensatory
gestures, or seek revenge as responses to forgiveness belief. More positive belief tends to
favor positive responses, and more negative belief tends to favor negative response.

Hypothesis 2

How members perceive the attitude and response of the church community
toward their offense was related to avoidance talk, revenge, distancing, and feeling close
as well. It appears if members perceive the church to be uncaring, judgmental, and
condemning, they may collude to conceal the offense and pretend everything is fine.
Another response may be to distance self from the church community, viewing it as a
collective joint participant in the offense. Those who perceive support and understanding
are more inclined to maintain closeness with the church and transgressor. They are the
ones who would more readily draw from the resources and programs of the church to
cope and heal.

Hypothesis 3

There is no evidence to substantiate forgiveness as a spiritual concept to be any
less challenging when practiced in the spiritual community. In fact, as hypothesis 2 and 3
show, it can be challenging or not challenging, depending on the perception of the
variability of belief and attitude of the church community as well as the offended
member.

Change Theory, Evaluation, and Application

A focus-group of twenty-two single parents from the church congregation agreed
to participate in a forgiveness workshop. The workshop was conducted on May 30,
2009, and lasted for a three-hour duration. Participants engaged in discussion and role-play following a forgiveness model of eight steps. The eight steps were broken into three sections as follow: (1) the cognitive, (2) the narrative, and (3) the affirmative. Each section was conducted for one hour.

The participants in the workshop were struggling with forgiveness issues and desired to move forward by forgiving. Offenses ranged from physical abuse, incest, abandonment, neglect, betrayal, divorce, custody issues, and defamation of character through slander and libel. It was an emotionally charged session as individuals vented the pain felt from the offense(s) experienced. There were individuals who expressed vehemently, and were adamant about never being able to forgive the perpetrator of their offense. It was even expressed that God understands and would not hold their withholding of forgiveness against them because of the nature of the offense.

Individuals felt free and safe to share certain levels of hurtful experience. This group was in existence for one and a half years as they each had an established relationship with the group. The intervention followed an instrument design produced in collaboration with this study. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants rated the benefits derived from the experience. A Likert-type scale was used to measure the effectiveness of the workshop in facilitating the achieving of forgiveness. The results are shown in Figure 5.
As Figure 5 shows, 65 percent of the participants in the workshop rate its effectiveness as being very helpful. The other 35 percent rate it as being helpful. There were no lower ratings than helpful, thus, it appears that each personally benefitted a great deal from participating. It also appears that each participant visualized forgiveness as an attainable goal in their lives. All the ratings were done subjectively and anonymously.

During the intervention, it was observed that participants were quite open and frank in expressing the issues of forgiveness. Since, according to laws of cybernetics, there can be no independent objective observable reality, a subjective assessment of personal forgiveness readiness would be crucial. The crux of the whole matter is that people know themselves better than anyone else. Each individual who had been offended knows whether they desire forgiveness or want to harbor anger and resentment. Despite the hurtful past experiences, it was the expressed desire of each participant to achieve forgiveness and live a forgiven life. Such expressions were articulated at the beginning, during, and following the workshop.
For many of the participants, a second-order change occurred as a result of their participation in the workshop. Each individual saw personal benefits and bought into it—this resulted in the second-order change. This was the intent of the workshop—to challenge the status quo, and hold out the possibility of forgiveness, highlighting pros and cons. Of course, a single workshop may not do it for everyone participating. At the very least, it is hoped that a door of opportunity would have been opened that each can walk through. Each individual was asked to self-rate where they were in their forgiveness quest following the workshop. The results appear in Figure 6.

**PARTICIPANT’S SELF-RATING OF FORGIVENESS**

![Graph showing self-ratings of forgiveness](image)

Figure 6. Participant’s self-rating of forgiveness.

**Current Challenges in Processing Healing and Forgiveness**

It appears, according to Figure 6, that there is an objective embracing of the forgiveness concept. Some 69% rated themselves as being forgiving, or very forgiving. Another 23% felt that they were somewhat forgiving, while 10% were seriously
struggling with unforgiving. Bridging the gap between theory and praxis appears to be
the greatest current challenge to healing and forgiveness.

Upon completion of the workshop, eleven of the twenty-two participants signed
up for one-on-one work using the model. Each individual was allowed to process
forgiveness at their own pace. Greater emphasis was placed on the outcome than on the
process. It is not the goal to get individuals through the process, following which, by
some automatic means, they achieve forgiveness. Instead individuals were allowed to
take baby steps towards their desired goal, using the time they needed to get there. Seven
of the eleven completed the process, three got about mid-way through, and one person
did not get started.

Of the seven individuals who made it to the end of the process, one relapsed and
needed to retrace the steps of the process to discover the reason. A current challenge in
processing healing and forgiveness, therefore, concerns the possibility of relapses. There
is no guarantee that each individual will get through the process and be able to release
their offender by forgiving. An individual may experience forgiveness and later, some
new offense might take them back into rehashing their past offense. Of the other six that
completed the process, they reflected the experience and gave reviews through e-mail
that appear in the appendix. The names of the participants were deleted from reviews for
anonymity in the effort to maintain strict confidentiality.

Analysis and Summary

The instruments measuring forgiveness have been found to be more universal in
nature. The need arose for some instrument to measure the thinking and behavior of
Christians in the church settings around forgiveness. The undergirding concern being
investigated surrounds the impact of one’s spirituality on forgiveness. It could be hypothesized that forgiveness is a more easily attained goal for Christians, for the reason that Christians are bombarded by forgiveness teachings through varied means in the church community.

Seventeen variables were established that speak more directly to the experience of Christians in the church setting. These variables were correlated with variables established by Hess, McCullough, and Yelsma. The spiritual variables of forgiveness were correlated with variables of distancing, feeling close, avoidance, revenge, forgiveness talk, difficulty talk, and anger talk. Whereas the established variables spoke to the relational and communication aspects of forgiveness, a vital link was missing. They did not consider the role of spirituality, while, forgiveness as a concept, is deeply rooted in spirituality.

It appears that members of the church congregation, based on the sample of this study, embrace the objective aspect of forgiving. In essence, individuals desire and seem more inclined to forgive when offended. The challenge, however, lies in the subjective aspect of forgiveness. How to apply this concept in everyday living, and interacting in the complex relational system that each operates in, presents a formidable challenge for many. This is where spiritual leadership can be of great value and assistance by leading change through cognitive, narrative, and affirmative work.

A major challenge for leadership, as experienced in the change theory and process of this study, is to keep the offended sufficiently motivated to pursue the goal of forgiveness until it is achieved. For various reasons, individuals would find it difficult to press on toward the goal. From the one-on-one sessions with the volunteer participants
from the single parents group, seven of the eleven reached the finish line. Even in getting there, those who made it were coached through the process—they too had experienced difficulty along the way. The other four individuals have not been able to get to the finish line, partly because of time conflicts with other things in their lives. It appears, however, that there may also have been some trepidation to facing their hurt. This may have made it difficult for them to pursue their goal to the end.

Leadership would need to invest time and patience with members who desire to pursue this goal. They would also have to express confidence in the individuals, and where applicable, their collective ability to achieve their goal of forgiveness. They must also be cognizant of affirming the small wins along the journey. These elements were quite motivating for those who achieved their goal of forgiveness. The forgiveness seeker must be allowed to direct the pace of the process, since it is their journey.

Further study needs to be done as to why members experience hurt in their familial relationships, resulting in suffering in their psyche. This study set out to investigate relationship hurt within the congregation. It was astounding to discover that 58 percent of the hurt experienced by participants in the study was generated within their familial relationship; the family being a microcosm of the macrocosm—the church affects and is affected by the other.

It appears, therefore, that much of the relationship hurt seen within the congregation is symptomatic of hurting families. There is immediate need for a proactive program geared to enhancing healthier familial relationships. Preventive measures are always better than curative means. A mere addressing of the problems surrounding hurt with the congregation would be to deal partially with the challenge. The underlying
casualty must be addressed. The family system and the church system combine to form a larger system. In order to adequately transform the relationship within the church, the family subsystem needs to be transformed also.
CHAPTER 5

A HEALING AND FORGIVENESS MODEL FOR WORKING WITH CHURCH MEMBERS

Overview

The model for working toward achieving forgiveness, designed in conjunction with this study, is based on a three-tier concept. It involves cognitive, narrative, and affirmative skills on the part of spiritual leadership as they work to facilitate forgiveness seekers in achieving their goal. Since forgiveness is a spiritual concept, a well-known biblical story is used to illustrate each tier of the model. The parable of the Prodigal Son highlights and supports the three-level concept of achieving forgiveness (Luke 15:11-32). There are eight steps which are broken down into the three levels of processing forgiveness. The first two tiers have three steps, and the third, two steps. The next three areas present the step-by-step processes of the research design for forgiveness to work.

The Cognitive Approach

The first level involves three steps: (1) surveying the landscape of your life, (2) marking the boundaries, and (3) depressurizing. When the forces of nature that disrupt strike, the area of earth targeted does not look the same following the impact. Take for example the tsunami of 2004, hurricane Katrina of 2006, and the more recent earthquake of Haiti in 2010. Those affected regions of the planet earth were catapulted
and bent out of shape. There are three questions to consider in surveying the landscape of your life: What is different about your life? What factors created the change in your life? Who is responsible for the change brought about in your life? These questions would obviously evoke certain emotions. This leads to step 2, marking the boundaries.

One of the very important aspects of forgiveness when offended is to acknowledge and affirm the emotions resulting from the offense. Whatever the emotions, they are yours, thus it appears more sensible to acknowledge than to deny their existence. Some may view negative emotions as inconsistent with being a good Christian. Such persons may resort to the defense mechanism of denial and suppress their negative emotions following an offense. The biblical accounts depict God through varied emotional states: sorrow and grief (Gen 6:3); anger (Micah 7:18); wrath (Heb 4:3); retributive laugh, sore displeased, and vex (Ps 2:4-6); and Jesus weeping (John 11:35). Of course, divine emotional states are always in a perfectly righteous form. This leads to Step 3, depressurizing.

The emotional responses can be more dangerous than the felt emotions. At this depressurizing step, the coping strategies are identified. The goal here is to determine healthy and unhealthy behavior responses to the offense. The goal is to discover what worked, in contrast to what did not work, for the offended person in their coping behavior responses. Offended individuals may need to be encouraged and coached to emote. This would be especially useful if it is discovered that they have suppressed their emotions.

In working with the individuals on a one-on-one basis during this study, some were encouraged to cry, others even to manifest outbursts of anger in a controlled environment. The analogy of an airplane coming in for landing elucidates the point.
During the landing approach, the aircraft has to depressurize in a controlled way—quite different from the need in taking off. In depressurizing, the aircraft loses pressure and assumes the gravitational weight needed to cope with the elements of earth wind, rain, snow, and asphalt. The depressurizing of an aircraft is a temporary coping strategy as aircrafts were not designed to remain on the ground.

The cognitive element of forgiveness in the parable of the Prodigal Son is shown in Luke 15:17. The Prodigal Son suddenly developed a mental awareness of the changes experienced in life. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger!'" (Luke 15:17 NKJV). This awareness came after surveying the landscape of life—from eating like a prince to eating like a pig. What has gone wrong? What created this change? Who is responsible? Such questions must have surfaced in the Prodigal's mind. The emotional boundary lines are not spelled out in the story. However, it is logical to conclude the Prodigal must have beaten himself, sobbed, and cried himself to sleep among pigs in the effort to cope. The road to change, however, began with the awareness of the goings on in personal and relational life experiences. A new chapter in the story of life is about to unfold for the Prodigal Son.

The Narrative Approach

The second level also involves three steps: (1) pressurizing, (2) demonstration of learning from the hurtful experience, and (3) releasing of the transgressor or self from the transgression—as did the Prodigal Son. The very aircraft that needed to depressurize, in order to cope with earth's gravitational forces, now needs to be pressurized to handle the gravitational forces of atmospheric space. In the context of forgiveness, pressurizing
involves acknowledging the positive emotions that usually go unattended when offended. It has to do with feelings such as pity, benevolence, and good will towards the offender, following the offense. Though one may acknowledge and affirm the negative emotions experienced following an offense, one does not have to remain feeling that way.

As the aircraft was designed for air travel primarily, humans are designed with the resilience to take off again and to soar. Taking off again would necessitate paying closer attention to the pressurizing emotions. They are of a more positive and healthier nature than the depressurizing ones. They are the ones that begin to rewrite life’s story, or open up a new chapter that overshadows the hurtful one. The offense can take on a new meaning at this stage of forgiveness. For example, the skyline of New York City looks different since the destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001; however, New York City continues to be, perhaps, one of the most attractive cities in the world and the global financial capital. The city still has great value, worth, and influence. Substantiating such notions, the rebuilding efforts began after a few years of cleaning up the debris from the unprecedented offense. It remains the investment capital, and tourists continue to pay frequent visits to New York City. This leads to Step 2, demonstration of learning from the experience.

Demonstration of learning following a hurtful experience involves putting measures in place to prevent a repeat of the offense. This is essential for the offended, as well as dependants under their supervision and care. Attempting to take off again, while leaving self open to repeat offenses, would be very risky and unwise. It could be likened to an aircraft attempting to take off while the cabin doors are open. This is the step where exploration is done as to what the offended could do differently to protect oneself and
others. In New York City, for example, the aviation rules have changed regarding air space traffic control since September 11, 2001. On the ground there is a heightened security check for passengers as well as crew. The rules in a relationship may need revamping before one can forgive—even reconciliatory relationships. This brings us to Step 3, the much bigger issue of forgiveness concerning the release of the transgressor.

By Step 3, forgiveness should have already emerged as being beneficial for the offended, as well as for the offender. The re-authoring of the offended life’s story may or may not include reconciliation. At this stage, the consequence for the offender must be carefully considered and weighed. The releasing of the transgressor ought to be a conscious act of the will. Genuine forgiveness cannot be forced or manipulated. This can be accomplished effectively only after due consideration of all the nuances surrounding the offense. If the offended still rehashes the hurt and is meandering in the negative emotions at this stage, that person is most likely not ready to forgive. Moreover, if the offended feels threatened and afraid of the offender at this stage, he or she is most likely not ready to forgive. This is where the three schools of thought on forgiveness diverge.

The narrative element of forgiveness in the parable of the Prodigal Son can be seen in Luke 15:18, 19. The Prodigal envisioned a better life in the Father’s house—even as a “hired servant.” Although life was going to be different, should the father accept the proposition, it afforded a better situation contrasted with where the Prodigal was at the time. The new story of life was self-narrated in a motivational speech or coaching type way. It demonstrated Steps 2 and 3 in the narrative element. It proposed protection of the remaining aspects of the father’s estate—sonship necessitates inheritance. The
Prodigal opted for a "hired servant" position in the father's house. Declination from sonship demonstrated a recognition and affirmation of consequences for the offense in forgiveness, seeking and giving. In the parable, the Prodigal generated and narrated the new story of life. Spiritual leaders can, however, help the offended in envisioning and developing the new story of their life. They can do this by telling true-to-life stories about forgiving, unforgiving, and the consequences. How the story ends, however, depends largely on the offended person. This leads to level 3, the final of the forgiveness model—coaching affirmatively.

The Affirmative Approach

There are two steps at this level: (1) ritualizing the forgiveness, and (2) celebrating the new freedom of forgiveness. Once the offended has released the offender, there should be some kind of ritual to mark the achievement of forgiveness. The biblical Patriarchs marked high emotional and spiritual points in their lives with symbols and rituals. Erecting altars, laying stones of remembrance, and offering sacrifices were some ways by which the biblical Patriarchs ritualized forgiveness.

The role of the spiritual leader at this final level is to help bring closure to the offense. This will be done by helping the offended clarify perspectives and explore ritual options of his or her own choosing. The ritual serves as affirmation and, where necessary, re-affirmation that forgiveness has indeed occurred. From the one-on-one study group done in conjunction with this research, some interesting rituals emerged. One person traveled overseas to meet her father who had not been in her life for forty plus years. Another planned to have a memorial service for her deceased brother, whom she offended by alienation due to a lifestyle choice. The brother died in a foreign country
seven years prior, and the sibling had since that time been living with guilt, remorse, and regrets. The sibling was unable to travel to the foreign country so could not attend the funeral. She needed closure. A third participant requested that she be re-baptized, thus beginning a new experience of life. This leads to step 2, and completion of the model of forgiveness.

The second step at this level is celebration of the forgiveness experienced. Humans often take many things for granted in life, especially when it comes to spiritual matters. Even in heaven there is celebration over forgiveness. "I say to you likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7 NKJV). Repentance is an element of forgiveness, and there is celebration in heaven each time it occurs. The question is asked, Should not humanity celebrate on earth every time forgiveness is achieved as well? Spiritual leadership should explore celebratory ideas with the offended upon achieving forgiveness. The coaching element of forgiveness can be seen in the parable of the Prodigal Son, which has the two steps as outlined at this level of the model.

Three significant rituals occurred when the Prodigal Son returned home. First, the father placed the best robe on the son, thus affirming forgiveness. Second, a ring was placed on the finger of the Prodigal, thus affirming sonship, in contrast to the servanthood proposition. Third, a sandal was placed on the Prodigal’s feet thus, affirming that a forgiven son must walk like a prince in the father’s house (Luke 15:22). Immediately following the three rituals, there was the celebration of forgiveness. The fatted calf was killed and the entire house was in celebration (Luke 15:23, 24).

There is a significant twist to the story that cannot be overlooked. The older
brother did not forgive the Prodigal sibling (Luke 15:25-32). This decent, faithful older brother finds self in the landscape surveying, boundary marking, and depressurizing tier of the model of forgiveness. The older brother became the victim of anger, hostility, resentment, and rationalization. The sobering thought is that the story ended without the older brother achieving forgiveness. The Prodigal, however, being forgiven was able to live a forgiven life. Often, full attention is given to the Prodigal when this passage is preached, dramatized, or discussed. Jesus actually presented two stories on forgiveness in the one parable. However, Jesus left blanks in the second story for each individual to complete as they re-author the story of their life whenever offended and hurt.

From my observation in working with the sample from the congregation, the step-by-step approach enabled participants to achieve forgiveness. At the cognitive level, participants were able to contextualize their hurt. For the first time they were really taking a close look at their lives, using before and after word pictures created through conversation. They were able to analyze the offence they experienced, by examining the factors, and the individuals responsible for the change brought about in their lives. In addition, participants experienced cathexis in a controlled and healthy way. I observed participants as they cried, spoke to an empty chair representing their transgressor, and simply vented their pent up emotions. They were able to do so in a non-judgmental and condemnation-free environment. In fact, they were encouraged to express their emotions through empathetic conversation, listening, and observation.

During the experience of processing the cognitive, there were expressions in words and countenance regarding a new freedom that began to dawn at this level. Some individuals confessed that for the first time, they truly talked and cried about their hurt in
such a manner. The cognitive level laid the foundation for participants to raise their building blocks in a re-structuring of their lives. A continued point of emphasis was though they were entitled to their emotions, they did not have to keep them. Only as individuals expressed a desire to move beyond the emotions resulting from the cognitive were they facilitated in advancing to the next level—the narrative.

Some incredible things happened at the narrative level. One participant upon entering the study could not stand to see her husband, the woman he committed adultery with, nor the baby resulting from the adultery. In re-writing the story of her life, the baby of adultery was included. She desired a happy life for her husband who was living with the baby’s mother. She encouraged her older children to bring the baby over to her place. Affection for the baby was expressed through cuddling and a new civil relationship began to emerge with her estranged husband. The other participants had amazing stories as well. In one case a marriage was restored from separation and divorce proceedings. Another case highlights a father-daughter relationship that began for the first time at age forty-eight. A victim of sexual abuse was able to confront her aging father who wept bitterly and asked for forgiveness. A new relationship emerged through elder care services that flowed out of love as opposed to mere obligation.

These individuals ritualized and began to live forgiveness in a new experience. Suggestions of rituals were built into the study but each participant chose what they desired to mark their new experience. Three rituals emerged from participants of the study namely: remarriage, rebaptism, and memorial service. These were geared to deal with the unique experiences of the participants. Others chose from the list of suggestions each marking their experience in their own unique way.
A God-Given, Passion-Stirring Vision

Peter M. Senge states, "If any one idea about leadership has inspired organizations for thousands of years, it's the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create—a future when things will be better than they are today."\(^{119}\) The future being envisioned for the church is one that reflects a loving, caring, and forgiving community. Many hurts may have been inflicted against congregants, ranging from tiny to colossal offenses. The hurtful experiences of the past presently affect individuals and groups within the congregation. The result is behaviors triggered by an unforgiving spirit in what were, formerly otherwise, great relationships. This model offers hope to church members and families struggling with unforgiveness.

The goal is to facilitate spiritual and emotional healing that is greatly needed within the congregation. The reason is there is a connection between a person's everyday functioning regarding the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health, and well-being. "What differentiates troubled and untroubled interpersonal relationships is not the presence or the absence of hurts but the willingness, even eagerness, to confess one's hurts to the person whom one offended, and to forgive the offender for the hurt inflicted."\(^{120}\) This is the vision of a preferred future for the church congregation. The church has been estranged, particularly our young people, for a long enough time. Robert K. Greenleaf adds to this discussion: "We need a religion, and a Church to husband its services, to heal the pervasive alienation and become a major building force in a new


\(^{120}\)Worthington, 59.
community that is more just and more loving, and that provides greater creative opportunities for its people."121

**Demonstrating Faith-Based Hope**

Words such as love and forgiveness are not easily comprehended and articulated by leadership as they visualize the pain members are experiencing from the emotional wounds inflicted by another. The spiritual act of forgiveness, predicated on love, can appear to be distant from the reality of the deep penetrating affects of abuse, betrayal, neglect, gossip, church politics, undermining, and manipulation among the community of believers. Jesus, the Son of God is the only guarantee of success in realizing the preferred future. Henry J. M. Nouwen captioned the faith-based hope for spiritual leaders and inspires this vision:

It is not enough for the Christian leader to have well-informed opinions about the burning issues of our time. The leadership must be rooted in a permanent, intimate relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus, who becomes the source for the words, advice, and guidance that would be given. Such an experience with God will make it possible for the leader to keep self from becoming caught up in divisiveness, remaining flexible without being relativistic, gentle and forgiving without being soft, and a true witness without being manipulative.122

**Exercising Solid Integrity**

It would be crucial to clearly articulate and define values—the beliefs and principles that govern behavior within the community of faith. It is, however, of even more importance that, as a leader, passion for these values is shown. The passion must

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121Greenleaf, 80.

be demonstrated by an intense commitment to these values and principles in every decision, and action. "If anyone is ever to become a leader that people would be willing to follow, one certain prerequisite is that they must be someone of principle." Far too many leaders fail to govern themselves according to the standards they hold up for followers. Mark H. Butler, Samuel K. Dahlin, and Stephen T. Fife add a comment on leadership integrity: "The leader of integrity would show forgiveness by overcoming personal resentment, not by denying self the right to resentment, but by endeavoring to view the wrongdoer with compassion, benevolence, and love while recognizing that he or she has willingly abandoned his or her right to them." Leadership ought to exemplify the values of the organization in every decision made and in every step taken towards the future that is envisioned. "Leadership would do well to understand that they bring shared values to life in a variety of settings—in daily group meetings, one-on-one conferences, telephone calls, visits to church members, or community members." In this sense, leadership is a performance art—but on a different and higher level than the secular arenas such as Broadway or Hollywood. Occupying center stage it is, therefore, incumbent upon leadership to be cognizant about modeling the preferred future envisioned. This is the kind of leadership integrity that would revolutionize and transform the church organization.


124 Butler, Dahlin, and Fife. 286.

125 Kouzes and Posner. 84.
Courage to Challenge the Status Quo

The mental model individuals hold regarding the church would impact their experience within the church. When their perception of the church changes, their role in the church system would also change, and they would get very different results. Here lies the key to remarkable and enduring change. The leader must first challenge personal mental models, as well as those of the individuals and sub-groups within the congregation. "When we are dealing with difficult and threatening problems in organizations, we need to limit the likelihood that mental models will constrain the ability to take effective action." Mental models have a way of providing confirming evidences of deeply held beliefs and perceptions regarding the way each sees the world and how it works. By the same token, each holds perceptions of how the church works—or ought to work. These mental models need to be challenged in an ongoing fashion. An effective way to challenge perception is to act contrary to expectations—forgive when others do not expect you to forgive.

Forgiving for the wrong reasons, however, such as to hold on to a destructive relationship, to identify with an individual or a group, to be recognized, and applauded by leadership, can be just as damaging as withholding forgiveness. The inner peace and joy that forgiveness brings would be lacking. It is incumbent, therefore, on leadership to challenge the reasons for desiring to forgive or to keep on holding to animosity, grudges, and hurts. The individual desiring to forgive must not merely embrace the concept of forgiveness—they must also see the attending benefits.

126 Hutchens, 74.
Unswerving Commitment to Empowering Members

People are the greatest asset of the church organizational system; therefore, unswerving commitment must be made to build the community of faith. A community where each member loves, cares, and forgives each other for advertent and/or inadvertent hurts inflicted. The goal is to empower members to live forgiveness to the fullest potential. This will require that forgiveness becomes a personal moral ideal and a way of life. Members of the congregation will be ennobled and enabled to forgive.

Real powerful leaders are those who truly pour into their followers. Janet O. Hagberg states. "Empowering others gives them dignity and does not diminish the giver and so everyone wins. Empowering others is to: raise them up, love them, reinstate them, give them responsibility, trust them, learn from them, and be led by them." It is impossible to engage such a lifestyle without truly forgiving. To truly forgive means to empower the wrongdoer by setting free from revengeful thoughts and desires. It means that the offended, and significant others, are to be treated differently from the behavior that brought about the hurt. It cannot be overemphasized that leadership can best empower people by modeling a desired attitude and behavior within their organizational system.

"Being a good leader is not something that occasionally occurs. It takes great thought, care, insight, commitment, and energy. When synthesized, it brings out the best of who you are." Today, tremendous interest is placed on what people know—their

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128 Kouzes and Posner, 75.
intelligent quotient (IQ). Indeed knowledge and intelligence are important ingredients to any reputable organization. "There is no doubt that brains are essential to success but, knowing stuff does not necessarily translate into action. Making something happen is not only a function of what we know—it is also a function of who we are and who we know."129

People within the church organization must experience a sense of personal accountability to themselves, to others in the faith community, and to God when dealing with the matter of forgiveness. There are four leadership essentials that strengthen others and increase their belief in their own ability to make a difference. They require that leadership works to (1) "ensure self-leadership, (2) provide choice, (3) develop competence and confidence, and (4) foster accountability."130

Creating a climate where people are involved and important is at the heart of strengthening others. In using these essentials, the leader functions as a facilitator and teacher enabling members in the church organization to learn and develop their skills. They also simultaneously provide institutional support needed to sustain personal development and maturation in forgiveness and interpersonal relationships. "In the final analysis, what leadership would be doing is turning their constituents into leaders themselves."131

129Kouzes and Posner, 260.

130Ibid., 284.

131Ibid.
Possessing an Abundance Mentality

Each individual member is a valued asset in the existence, life, growth, and mission of the church. Each is uniquely gifted for the fulfillment of God’s purposes in and through the church congregation. "We need to learn how to engage the creativity that exists everywhere in our organization. We need to engage with each other, and experiment to find out what works for us, and support one another as the true inventors that we are."^{132} It is impossible, however, to forgive someone that the offended did not engage physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

Relational challenges are present everywhere. Ethical and moral questions function as key elements in the relationship any organization has with colleagues, stakeholders, and the wider communities. The tendency is to observe and identify the things that separate members from others in the church’s organizational system. When attention is focused on the differences, people become separated. The survival of the church is guaranteed as each learns to participate in a network of relationships—forming a beautiful collage from being different. "Autopoiesis describes a very different universe, one in which all organisms are capable of creating a ‘self’ through their intimate engagement with all others in their system."^{133} Humankind is gregarious, and divine wisdom designed them for connectedness with like species. Members are really never objective observers of what happens in the church organization. There is interference or participation in the constructive or destructive goings-on in the organization. Humankind influences and is influenced by the behaviors that inflict hurt on others, or generate

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^{132} Wheatley, 9.

^{133} Ibid., 20.
healing from a hurtful offense. Regarding the church as a system, the collective body is
greater than all of its individual parts. The church congregation can unleash an
abundance of solutions when combined effort desires and works for change. Wheatley
further stated:

The quantum world is not just weird and fascinating. As more of us contemplate
these strange behaviors at the subatomic level, we are given potent images that can
enrich our lives at the macro level. Quantum imagery challenges so many basic
assumptions, including our understanding of relationships, connectedness, prediction,
and control.\textsuperscript{134}

The church organizational system has, therefore, an abundance of potential to
regulate itself when problems are perceived and dealt with systematically. Each individual
within the church system must, however, maintain a clear sense of their identity within
the larger network of relationships. Leadership needs to understand that genuine change
is prompted only when a member decides that changing is the only way to maintain self
within the larger web of relationships. Forgiveness in the church’s system ought,
therefore, to be the work and responsibility of every member. Approaching forgiveness
from a systemic perspective should always be in the consciousness of leadership when
dealing with this organizational challenge.

Fostering Participation

Every individual within the church congregation would be invited to participate in
learning and practicing this forgiveness concept. Training is essential and would be
done, therefore, through seminars, workshops, sermons, and modeling during
committees, groups, and one-on-one interactions. “The participative universe we inhabit

\textsuperscript{134}Wheatley, 33.
provides a sense of 'ownership.' It is a good method for fostering participation in the forgiveness paradigm of this project. People support what they create because they own it. In the context of the church congregation, "ownership describes personal connections to the organization—the powerful emotions of belonging that inspire people to contribute."

The paradigm put forth in this study may be challenged by ingrained habits of anger, resentment, and retribution due to offenses. Humans are composites of life-long habits that are "consistent, often unconscious patterns, that constantly, daily express our characters and produce our effectiveness or ineffectiveness." What humans nurture becomes their nature. Excellence in this paradigm must, therefore, become a counter-habit to the old and ingrained ones. It would require practice, patience, and time to become a new way of life. Stephen R. Covey supports the discussion: "The only way that people learn is by doing things they've never done before. Those who do only what they already know how to do never learn anything new. Promoting learning requires building in a tolerance for error and a framework for forgiveness. Learning requires tolerating people who make mistakes."

People learn rapidly when they have a genuine sense of responsibility for their actions. To facilitate such rapid learning, there must be permeability of the church system. "Openness is a complex and subtle concept, which can be understood only in

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135 Wheatly. 68.
136 Ibid.
138 Kouzes and Poscr. 216.
light of the disciplines of working with mental models. There are two different aspects of openness—participative and reflective.”

Whereas participative openness creates an atmosphere where individuals are free to speak out, reflective openness begins with the willingness to challenge one’s own thinking. “Reflective openness lives in the attitude, ‘I may be wrong and the other person may be right.’”

Facilitating Effective Planning

Leadership approach to forgiveness intervention and effectiveness will be best facilitated by proper planning. “Forgiveness is initiated by empathy for the offender, furthered by humility in the person who was hurt, and solidified through making a public commitment to forgiveness.”

This plan operates within dyads, and focuses more on the dyadic interaction than on individual behavior. “It operates on the premise that forgiveness is an interpersonal transaction in which a forgiver chooses to abandon his or her right to retaliate against or withdraw emotionally from an offender after an offence.” Again, the logistics of the relationship must be taken into consideration regarding feasibility, legality, and sensibility in bringing the two together.

Confronting Inertia

Confrontational mediation is the most common form of conflict management offered by Western interventions. It is based on two assumptions of effectiveness. First,
the two parties must be brought together in a setting with a neutral person who lays down
the rules for negotiating a resolution. Second, that each will be able to see and
understand the conflicting issues and, consequently, forgive the other. It has been my
experience that this method has often exacerbated and reinforced the conflict, rather than
to bring about healing to the relationships.

A good starting point in confronting an unforgiving spirit is what my model
describes as surveying the landscape of one’s life following the offense. While this
might work best with an individual, the focus is more diffused when dealing with two or
more persons. The leader has to develop the skill of attending simultaneously to the issue
at hand, patterns of communication, conflict re-enforcers, intimacy, attributions of blame,
description of hurtfulness, and other variables to effect meaningful change.143

There are a number of psychological variables engaged in a process of
intervention on forgiveness. These variables manifest in psychological defenses such as
anger, for example. The leader must confront the anger with a view to facilitating
release, as opposed to harboring of the anger in an offended person. Being able to detect
shame and guilt, and allowing for such admittance is a skill that leaders must develop and
master. Awareness of cathexis is crucial as victims usually attach excessive amount of
emotional energy to hurtful experiences and events. They do this by spending much time
replaying the events of the injury in the mind.

Listening is perhaps the most effective tool in any meaningful forgiveness
intervention. “Only a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by
listening first. To get a significant level of meaning in the hearer’s experience, our basic

143 Worthington. 67.
attitude in navigating the confrontation must be a desire to understand. Many attempts to communicate are nullified by saying too much.144

Managing Change Well

Genuine change cannot be coerced but it certainly can be managed. "If there is one cardinal rule of change in human condition, it is that you cannot make people change. Mandates alter some things but they do not alter what matters. When complex change is involved, people do not and cannot change by being told to do so.”145 Forgiveness might be felt and/or even articulated but it should be expressed in some overt form of behavior. That will make the forgiveness become more real to the forgiving person.

In regarding language, the vehicle for change, "nothing is meaningful until it is related to the hearer's own experience."146 Once forgiveness is achieved leadership must "show care by paying attention to the people involved, to what they are doing, and to how they are feeling. When we know someone is looking for positive examples we'll make an effort to reveal them.”147 Kouzes and Posner write:

As leadership observe behaviors, it is important to be clear about the standards being sought and believe and expect that people will perform like winners. With an attitude that people will live up to high expectations and with clear standards, leaders have to pay attention to what's happening around them so they can find those positive examples to recognize.148

144Greenleaf. 17. 18.


146Greenleaf. 18.

147Kouzes and Posner. 327. 328.

148Ibid.
In order to effectively manage the change from an unforgiving to a forgiving commitment, there are four psychosocial theories leadership must know: (1) "self-perception. (2) attitudinal change, (3) vestige change, and (4) recovering of damaged self-esteem." The implications are that a person infers their own attitudes after observing their own overt behavior. Worthington expands on this:

When one acts as a forgiving person, that one can label self as having forgiven, and begin to put the incident in the past—self-perception. The overt act of a genuine commitment to forgive solidifies—attitudinal change. The victim is motivated to align vestiges of unforgiving attitudes to be consistent with the act of admitting forgiveness in some public forum—vestiges change. The offended finds other ways to engage in public acts of altruism as opposed to the prior seeking for revenge or humiliation of the offender. Forgiving the offender becomes benevolent rather than malevolent—recovering of damaged self-esteem.150

Analysis and Summary

Having come to the end of this project, what then? It is hoped that the objective of the intent and the content would be realized for leaders and lay folks who use it. What I am proposing is a process that worked for me in helping members of my congregation to achieve forgiveness. This project can work as a catalyst for transformational change, beginning at KBT, and like a brush fire, spreading throughout the NEC, NAD, GC, and the entire world. Such a change may begin one step at a time, one person at a time, and one congregation at a time. The church has a wonderful opportunity to become a trend setter, and a trail blazer in the virtue of forgiveness. Learning how to give, receive, and live this virtue necessitates a process and time. This is the process! Now is the time! We are the people! The call is for leaders everywhere to embrace this concept and join the

149 Worthington, 64.
150 Ibid.
mission for change—genuine change, through facilitating forgiveness individually and corporately.

This is what I've done. I observed the way members of my congregation were relating to each other when offended. A great deal of my time was being spent in mediation work with offenders and offended members. I discovered that in many situations, ignorance prevailed—ignorance regarding the real issue(s), and people involved in the offence. So, I immediately knew that I had to challenge the cognition of the individuals involved in an offence. At first, the process for the participants and me was heuristic—in that it was experimental learning. I developed a step-by-step process built upon three levels of progression toward the goal of achieving forgiveness.

The first level—the cognitive—brought all the pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle. This was done through a combination of one-on-one and group work. The study utilized both the group and individualized processes to maximize the result. In the group process, the material was presented in a workshop style. The participants’ cognition was challenged at level one, following which they broke off into small groups and responded to vignettes of forgiveness around the cognitive. The cognitive highlighted the change, factors, people, and emotions involved in creating, and resulting from the offence. I discovered that the strength of the workshop and group work is that it affords peer-learning and support. The individualized work, however, affords privacy and confidentiality for those who needed that type of setting.

The second level—the narrative—pulled together the other emotions that are usually suppressed when offended. It was discovered that when people are experiencing negative emotions from a hurtful offence, other positive emotions around the same hurt
run parallel. These were determined to be the building blocks to new experiences and relationships from the hurtful one(s). So, what I did was to empower participants through coaching, to consider the other emotions they were experiencing. These were usually around themes of love, goodwill, and benevolence towards the offender. The offended were encouraged to take baby steps in extending them once it was deemed safe to do so. Safety included measures to protect self and dependants from further offences, and consideration of any legal implication of the offence. When the participants felt comfortable and secure in extending those parallel positive emotions towards the offender—they began to consider forgiving.

The third level—the affirmative—is where as leader, I expressed belief in, and support of the offended in extending forgiveness. At this level, they consider any desired restorative justice acts from the offender, and the possibility of reconciliation. The forgiveness was, however, not predicated upon restorative justice acts or reconciliation. It stemmed from the positive emotions experienced alongside the negative ones. The offended were, however, clear about what they desired at this level. When the offended released the offender, they ritualized the act of releasing the transgressor from the emotional indebtedness of the offence. Finally, they celebrated the new freedom embraced.

This simple plan worked for me and I am convinced that the same would be experienced by leaders and lay person who follow the steps. Remember it takes patience and time! Pastors can use the same three levels of approaches in preaching and teaching forgiveness to the congregation. I look forward to feedback from leaders who adopt this approach in their work.
CHAPTER 6

LIMITATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Limitations

The DMin in Leadership gave me an opportunity to pursue an evidence based ministry. I now have a better understanding as to what works, and what does not work, in helping members in relationship conflict and forgiveness. This study facilitates transformational leadership for doing relationship healing and reconciliatory ministry with church members. As the mantra goes, "doing the same old thing, in the same old way, will produce the same old results. The process developed with this study provides ministry something new to try. Change does not always happen on a large scale. In fact, system's theory asserts that change in one part of the system changes the entire system. As I have been able to directly impact 22 members and 48 indirectly, within my church congregational system, helping them to move toward living forgiveness—the entire system has, therefore, been affected and changed!

This study in no way claims to be an exhaustive treatise of the dynamics involving the complex concept of forgiveness. The study fell short of its initial goal of studying 10% of the congregation as only 5% returned the completed questionnaire. In addition, the study design was intended to be more practical than philosophical. Therefore, I view this project as a means to an end and not an end in and of itself. The
reason being there is so much more to be explored around this topic and many questions still remain unanswered as well. However, in this work, there is a bridge between psychology and the theology of forgiveness. In essence you would discover how to relate social science with scripture, in resolving issues of forgiveness in spiritual leadership work with congregants.

There is need for further study surrounding family hurt and forgiveness within the congregation. Further study needs to examine gender forgiveness also in that 67% of the participants were females. This is an accurate reflection of the composition of the congregation. It would be interesting to discover similarities and differences in gender processes of forgiveness. What I would want to do differently is simultaneously study two congregations or groups within the church system. I would approach the study by doing a pre-test, and post-test, applying treatment using a control group, and, comparing the differences between the groups.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow outline a simplified step-by-step approach that any spiritual leader can easily adopt and practice. It would be important to keep in mind that this can be followed in helping individual or group desiring to process forgiveness. Remember that it requires commitment and time that enable the offended to work at his or her own pace. Understand that this process is about the hurting individual(s) therefore, the role of the spiritual leader is simply to coach. Be conscious that offended individuals usually do not perceive and think correctly, and, this apparently affects their emotional feelings. This process of facilitating correct thinking and perceiving is to be entered into with the view of facilitating correct thinking and perceiving with a view to
enhancing emotional feelings of offended persons. In processing the cognitive and the narrative levels, questions would prove more helpful than statements. At the affirmative level, statements of confidence would prove to be more helpful.

Steps at the Cognitive Level

- Survey the landscape of the offended person's life to create awareness of the following:
  
  - What is different about their life?
  
  - What factors created the change in their life?
  
  - Who is responsible for the change in their life and that they may need to consider forgiving?

- Mark the boundaries of their emotions:
  
  - Identify each emotion experienced as a direct result of the offense
  
  - Identify secondary emotions indirectly connected to the offense. These may flow from generational hurts, or socialization experiences of similar offenses
  
  - Identify emotional behavior responses to the hurt
  
  - Identify how each emotional response benefits or hurts the offended with a view to helping offended form being twice victimized
  
  - Let the offended know that they have a right to their emotions from the hurtful experience
  
  - Encourage healthy emotional responses to the hurt in a controlled way
  
  - Discourage unhealthy responses to the hurtful experience
  
  - Empathetically encourage emotional responses in your presence
• Underscore that as they have a right to all their emotions—they have a choice to keep or discard also

Steps at the Narrative Level

➤ Identify what the offended desires to do to get his or her life moving smoothly on track again. Note that it must be their personal desire and now what they are being influenced to do. The goal at this step is to externalize from within the offended:

• A diminished sense of self by establishing that notwithstanding the offense—they are a whole person and capable of living a wholesome life
• A diminished sense of worth by establishing that they are valued by you, the church community, and by God also.
• A diminished sense of competence by defined contributions the offended can make to community of faith. Offended from this study have committed to a care-fronting ministry to help members who are offended
• Detach the offended person from the offense and treat them as two separate and distinct entities
• Identify steps taken to protect self, minors, and other dependents from a repeat offense
• Identify any restorative justice acts that the offended expects from the offender—tangible or intangible
• Identify how the offended desires to relate to the offender in the immediate present and foreseeable future
• Identify any covert or overt expressions of forgiveness the offended has made or is desirous of making

• Celebrate every small step taken in the direction of forgiveness

Steps at the Affirmative Level

Affirm any covert or overt expressions of forgiveness and mark all major victory with a ritual. Explore with the offended what they want to establish as their ritual and affirm choice. The Patriarchs marked high emotional and spiritual points in their lives with symbols. Some participants in the study desired or tried the following rituals:

• Rebaptism as a symbol of a new start to their personal life

• Remarriage as a symbol of a new beginning in their love relationship

• Burial service in a case where the undesired memory of past was haunting an offended or offender

• Burning of undesirable past that has been written on paper

Celebrate the new freedom of forgiveness. Brainstorm with the offended how they would like to celebrate their new freedom of forgiveness and affirm choice. This can be done in varied ways such as:

• A physical make over as in a simple change in hair style and dress

• Begin dating again

• Relocating to a new town, state, or country

• Going back to school

• Changing career

• Taking a special trip/vacation
• Hosting of a thanksgiving service

Conclusion

It appears that participants in the study embraced the theory of forgiveness, but had difficulty aligning theory with praxis. The step-by-step process highlighting cognitive, narrative, and affirmative approaches to forgiveness enabled participants to achieve their goal. The degree of challenge in practicing the spiritual discipline of forgiveness tended to shift as certain variables shifted. These variables manifested in personal belief and attitude of church community.

Social science, for the most part, responds to the horizontal aspects of human relationships in forgiveness. And yet, we cannot truly understand and live the complex concept of forgiveness without the vertical. A lack of understanding and synthesis of the horizontal and vertical axes of forgiveness result in faulty belief and attitude. There needs to be reasoning from God to social science and not from social science to God in facilitating forgiveness. The transaction that took place on the cross not only defines—it illustrates how to extend, receive, and live the virtue of forgiveness.

It is my belief that if a similar program is followed in many congregations, there would be results such as those obtained in this study. With the necessary cultural adaptations in place, I believe that the participation of many can be engaged and hence some shifts in their attitude and practice of the grace of forgiveness will become evident. It is to this end, that I offer this work as the culmination of my work for the Doctor of Ministry degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. I sincerely hope that many would be blessed because of it.
APPENDIX A

LETTERS AND SURVEYS

1. Sample of Circular Letter sent to the following individuals seeking permission to use their standardized instruments:
   a) Michael McCullough, PhD; Department of Psychology - University of Miami
   b) Jon A. Hess, PhD; Department of Communication - University of Missouri-Columbia
   c) Paul Yelsma, PhD; Department of Communication - Western Michigan University

2. Sample of letter sent to the Kingsboro Temple Church Board to pursue study using human subjects within the congregation.

3. Forgiveness Questionnaire
April 23, 2007

Michael McCullough, PhD
Department of Psychology
University of Miami

Dear Dr. McCullough:

This missive comes seeking permission to use your forgiveness scale in facilitating study for a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) dissertation project. I am a student at the Andrews University Theological Seminary located in Berrien Springs Michigan.

Currently, I am the senior pastor of the Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists—a ministry in downtown Brooklyn, New York. I have been leading this ministry since January 2005. Early in the assignment to this pastorate it was observed that an estimated 35% of the 1,046 membership is struggling with forgiving. In addition to my pastoral training, I have completed post graduate studies in Marriage and Family Therapy at Hofstra University New York.

It was determined that a study focusing on the element of forgiveness within the congregation is necessary to lead change for healthier personal and interpersonal relationships. My research project is titled: “The transformational effects of forgiveness in the lives of randomly selected individuals comprising the Kingsboro Temple congregation. A minimum of 100 participants is expected for the study. The purpose of this study is to help individuals who are struggling with forgiving, and to assist them in moving toward emotional healing and forgiveness.

Your permission will facilitate a meaningful study that may shed further light on this important quality in the human experience. I will be happy to discuss terms of use, and can assure you that the scale will be used only for the purpose of this study. You may contact me through mobile (718) 928-8173 for any dialogue concerning this request.

Thanks in anticipation of your positive and quick response.

Sincerely,

Ainsworth E. Joseph
Ainsworth E. Joseph, MS. PD MFT
Senior Pastor
Thanks for your interest. You’re very welcome to use the scale. Please see my web site for information on scoring, interpretation, etc. Good luck in your work!

Best regards,

Mike
April 23, 2007

Jon A. Mess, PhD
University of Missouri-Columbia
Department of Communication
115 Switzler Hall, Columbia, MO 65211

Dear Dr. Hess:

This missive comes seeking permission to use your forgiveness scale in facilitating study for a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) dissertation project. I am a student at the Andrews University Theological Seminary located in Berrien Springs Michigan.

Currently I am the senior pastor of the Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists, a ministry in downtown Brooklyn, New York. I have been leading this ministry since January 2005. Early in the assignment to this pastorate it was observed that an estimated 35% of the 1046 membership is struggling with forgiving. In addition to my pastoral training I have completed post graduate studies in Marriage and Family Therapy at Hofstra University New York.

It was determined that a study focusing on the virtue of forgiveness within the congregation is necessary to lead change for healthier personal and interpersonal relationships. My research project is titled: "The transformational effects of forgiveness in the lives of members of the Kingsboro Temple congregation. My goal is to secure 100 participants for the study. The purpose of this study is to help individuals who are struggling with forgiving, and to assist them in moving toward emotional healing and forgiveness.

Your permission will facilitate a meaningful study that may shed further light on this important quality in the human experience. I will be happy to discuss terms of use, and can assure you that the scale will be used only for the purpose of this study. You may contact me through mobile (718) 928-8173 for any clarification concerning this request.

Thanks in anticipation of your positive and quick response.

Sincerely,

Ainsworth E. Joseph, MS, PD MFT
Senior Pastor
Hi Joseph --

Thanks for getting in touch. That scale that you are referring to is not one of the scales I have created (I'm trying to think of who it might be from, and can't come up with a name). In any case, as long as a scale has been published in an academic journal, it is my understanding that you can use it without permission for any research you want to do. I don't know if you can use it in anything that you make a profit from, but if you're just doing research, I think that academically published scales are free for use.

Good luck to you!

Best,
Jon Hess
April 23, 2007

Paul Yelstna, PhD
Department of Communication
Western Michigan University
1903 West Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5245

Dear Dr. Yelstna:

Today I am sending out official requests for use of scales from the various authors to facilitate my study in forgiveness. This missive comes seeking permission to use your forgiveness scale in facilitating study for a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) dissertation project. I am a student at the Andrews University Theological Seminary located in Berrien Springs Michigan.

Currently I am the senior pastor of the Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists—a ministry in downtown Brooklyn New York. I have been leading this ministry since January 2005. Early in the assignment to this pastorate it was observed that an estimated 35% of the 1046 membership is struggling with forgiving. In addition to my pastoral training I have completed post graduate studies in Marriage and Family Therapy at Hofstra University New York.

It was determined that a study focusing on the element of forgiveness within the congregation is necessary to lead change for healthier personal and interpersonal relationships. My research project is titled: "The transformational effects of forgiveness in the lives of members of the Kingsboro Temple congregation. My goal is to have 100 participants for the study. The purpose of this study is to help individuals who are struggling with forgiving, and to assist them in moving toward emotional healing and forgiveness.

Your permission will facilitate a meaningful study that may shed further light on this important quality in the human experience. I will be happy to discuss terms of use, and can assure you that the scale will be used only for the purpose of this study. You may contact me through mobile (718) 928-8173 for any clarification concerning this request.

Thanks in anticipation of your positive and quick response.

Sincerely,

Ainsworth E. Joseph, MS, PhD MFT
Senior Pastor
Hello Joseph,

YES, you have permission to use the forgiveness scale in facilitating study for a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) dissertation project. I look forward to seeing what transpires from this study. I am sure that you have requested rights from the other authors as well.

Paul
March 17, 2007

Dear Pastor Joseph,

Greetings in the name of Jesus!

The Kingsboro Temple welcomes your study and as such, gives its approval for you to engage a sample of the congregation in participating. It is our hope that this study would prove to be beneficial to our congregation and a blessing to many others in the Christian faith.

We are praying for your success in this venture!

Sincerely,

Claudette Jackson
Church Clerk
Forgiveness in Personal and Relational Experiences

Survey Booklet

Christian Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

by
Pastor Ainsworth E. Joseph
May, 2007
Survey Consent Form for Members
Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists
Doctor of Ministry Dissertation Project

Title of Study: The Transformational Effects of Forgiveness in the Lives of Randomly Selected Individuals Comprising the Kingsboro Temple Congregation. Principal Investigator: Pastor Ainsworth E. Joseph (DMin student)

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "The transformational effects of forgiveness in the lives of randomly selected individuals comprising the Kingsboro Temple Congregation. This research project, conducted by Pastor Ainsworth E. Joseph in conjunction with Christian Ministries Theological Seminary, Andrews University, is being conducted to advance our understanding of the dynamics of forgiveness in personal and interpersonal relationships. It proposes to develop a model to help individuals struggling with forgiving in moving toward emotional healing and forgiveness.

In this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire on the Forgiveness of transgressions or hurts experienced personally or relationally. It will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. Your responses will be completely anonymous so do not put your name anywhere on the document.

There are no foreseen physical, psychological, or social risks associated with your participation in this project. You may experience "slight uneasiness" in filling out the questionnaire because you may reflect on some of the events associated with the transgressions that caused you discomfort in the first place. Two personal risks that you may want to consider are 1) an "inconvenience of participating in the study" and 2) the "loss of time that you normally would have devoted to other activities." If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may return the blank questionnaire to the "drop box" at the rear of the room. Completing and returning the questionnaire indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntarily and that there will be no reward or no penalty associated with completion or non completion of questionnaires. All data will be collected with no names or identities connected to your responses. The data will be reported as group data and not individual data. The general benefit of this project may be for researchers, pastors, counselors, educators and practitioners to have an increased understanding of the element of forgiveness in relationships. It is hoped, we may learn more about the ways to improve the forgiveness of transgressions personally and relationally. If you have any questions, you may contact Pastor Ainsworth E. Joseph at (718-776-0490); or Dr. H. Peter Swanson at (269) 471-3201. Consent for the study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Andrews University.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.
Forgiveness Study

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study on the dynamics of forgiveness. The information you provide will help us better understand this quality personally and relationally. Please answer all questions carefully and honestly by circling the appropriate numbers on this questionnaire; or check box.

Do not put your name or other identifying data on the survey itself. All responses are confidential.

Return your unidentified questionnaire in the envelope or box provided.

I have received and read the informed consent letter and recognized that by completing and returning this survey I have given my consent.

Demographic Information

1. Your Gender: 1 = Male 2 = Female

2. Highest level of education:
   1 = some high school 2 = high school diploma
   3 = 1 year of college 4 = 2 to 3 years of college
   5 = bachelors degree 6 = masters degree
   7 = Ph.D. or equivalent

3. Race:
   1 = African American 2 = Haitian American
   3 = Caribbean American 4 = Hispanic
   5 = Other ________________________

4. Your age in years: [ ]

5. Marital Status:
   1 = Married 2 = Divorced 3 = Widowed 4 = Separated 5 = Single
   6 = No. of Times Married [ ] 7 = Years Married [ ] 8 = No. of Children [ ]

Forgiver Perspective

Please read instructions carefully!
In a few sentences briefly describe the specific nature of the hurt or transgression that occurred between you and a family member or close friend.

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

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Before proceeding, take a minute to remember the details of ONE situation when you were hurt within a particular relationship.

Don't use his or her name, but indicate the type of the relationship you have with this person below.

4. **The person** who hurt or transgressed against you was:

   1 = your spouse [ ]
   2 = your partner [ ]
   3 = a close friend [ ]
   4 = a date [ ]
   5 = your mother [ ]
   6 = your father [ ]
   7 = a family member [ ]
   8 = other [ ]

   (fill in the blank) (fill in the blank)

**Level of transgression or hurt**

There are various types or kinds of transgressions, offenses, hurtful or harmful behaviors, or inflicted pains that sometimes occur between people in personal relationships. These injurious behaviors between partners or friends may invoke forms of forgiveness or avoidance or punishment by the person who has been injured or hurt.

First, read these examples below, and then at the bottom of the page, SELECT ONE LEVEL OF TRANSGRESSION that most closely represents the specific nature of the transgression you experienced.

**Examples of:**

**TINY transgression**

This person and you had arranged to spend an evening together, but when the evening came this person told you that he/she had arranged to do something else with another person.

**SMALL transgression**

This person often says foolish or hurtful things that irritate you or make your feel uncomfortable when you are together with him/her.

**MEDIUM transgression**

This person says he/she will share expenses for a mutually shared experience (travel, purchase of a shared item—computer, concert tickets, etc.), but spends the money on things for himself/herself.

**LARGE transgression**

This person says he/she will take care of a very important issue (making payments of important bills—rent, telephone, etc., picking up friends or clients at the airport), but repeatedly does not do what he/she says and you, as well as other people, are hurt because of his/her neglect.
This person has a problem with an addictive behavior (alcohol abuse, drug usage, gambling, abusive language, lying, etc.) and this transgression has caused you psychological pain and has severely harmed your relationship with him/her.

**HUGE transgression**
This person and you have had a committed relationship for several years, but he/she has been spending a lot of time with another person and you find out that the two of them have had an extra-marital sexual affair and this person is no longer talking with you.

**COLOSSAL transgression**
This person has caused you or someone close to you severe physical pain or death.

Based on the examples from above, please indicate the **severity** of the transgression or offensive behavior that this person has displayed toward you.

Please circle a number that represents the severity of the transgression against you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tiny</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Huge</th>
<th>Colossal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communication of Forgiveness**

Yelsma (2003)

Please respond to each of the items below, reflecting on how you communicate with this person who you have previously identified. Even though some items may be difficult to respond to, try to answer each item by circling the appropriate number on the answer sheet.

Use the following scale to indicate your behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>(2) Disagree</th>
<th>(3) Neutral</th>
<th>(4) Agree</th>
<th>(5) Strongly Agree</th>
<th>(6) Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I want to talk more with this person about the incident, in an attempt to understand why he/she behaved the way he/she did. 1 2 3 4 5 0
2. I depend mostly on my feelings to determine if I should forgive this person. 1 2 3 4 5 0
3. I have told this person that I forgave him/her for the transgression he/she
has committed.

4. I found it helpful to talk many times with this person during the process of forgiving him/her.

5. I continue to express my feelings with this person hoping to understand why he/she committed this transgression.

6. I have clearly stated my objections to this person about the transgression.

7. I will not tell this person of my forgiveness until he/she can be trusted.

8. I want to continue interacting with this person to understand what happened.

9. There is no need to talk further about the experience, now I have forgiven this person.

10. I am no longer concerned about the incident.

11. I have altered my behavior to reduce the likelihood of being hurt again.

12. I avoid talking with this person about the incident.

13. Talking about the transgression with another person (3rd party) has helped me to forgive the person who has hurt me.

14. I have verbally reprimanded or chastised this person because I have been hurt by him/her.

15. I do not know what to say next to this person because of what he/she has done to me.

16. I actively listened to this person as a way of helping me to understand why he/she has hurt me.

17. I will never talk with this person again because of his/her transgression.

18. I continually ask this person questions in an attempt to understand why this incident happened.

19. I ask questions, seeking an explanation of why this person has hurt me with the hope of developing a better understanding of our relationship.

20. I have directly asked for an apology from this person, wanting him/her to know that I have been hurt by his/her offensive behavior.

21. I have clearly stated my disapproval to this person for his/her offensive behavior.
22. I have shared (or expressed) the pain that I experienced, hoping that a better understanding will occur between this person and myself.  

23. I choose **not** to express my negative thoughts or feelings to this person about the hurtful behavior he/she has committed.  

24. Although I have negative feelings, I **do not** express my feelings to this person for a fear of counterattack or retaliation.  

25. I will continue to verbally chastise (or punish) this person for his/her hurtful behavior.  

26. I have expressed forgiveness to this person, hoping that the cycle of hurtful behavior will stop.  

27. I have avoid talking with this person, when I can, because of his/her hurtful behavior.  

28. I have clearly expressed my anger towards this person for his/her offensive behavior.  

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree (6) Does Not Apply  

1 2 3 4 5 0  

29. I have screamed (yelled) in disapproval to this person because of his/her offensive behavior.  

30. I understand why this person committed the offensive behavior.  

31. I have verbally pardoned this person for his/her behavior.  

32. I often get confused about what emotions I am feeling toward this person.  

33. I don't know what is going on inside of me because of this experience.  

34. It is difficult for me to reveal my inner most feelings about this transgression.  

35. I am able to clearly express my feelings about this transgression.  

36. I tried to imagine how I would feel if I were in this person's place.  

37. When I was upset with this person, I tried to “put myself in his/her shoes” for a while.  

38. I believe that there are two sides to every issue involving others and I tried to understand both of them.  

1 2 3 4 5 0
Transgression Strategies

McCullough et al. (1998)

Please reflect on your current thoughts and feelings about this person who hurt you by responding to the following questions. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the questions by circling the appropriate number on the answer sheet.

(1) Strongly Disagree  (2) Disagree  (3) Neutral  (4) Agree  (5) Strongly Agree  (6) Does Not Apply

39. I will make him/her pay.  1  2  3  4  5  0
40. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0
41. I want this person to get what he/she deserves.  1  2  3  4  5  0
42. I am going to get even.  1  2  3  4  5  0
43. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.  1  2  3  4  5  0
44. I keep as much distance between us as possible.  1  2  3  4  5  0
45. I act as if he/she does not exist, or is not around.  1  2  3  4  5  0
46. I do not trust him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0
47. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0
48. I avoid him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0
49. I cut off the relationship with him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0
50. I withdraw from him/her.  1  2  3  4  5  0

Relationship Distance Index


These items describe some ways people distance themselves within interpersonal relationships. Indicate how much you either did or never did each of these behaviors by circling the appropriate number on the answer sheet.

never rarely occasionally sometimes often very often did this did this did this did this did this did this every time possible

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
51. When talking to this person, I kept the conversation away from topics that were intimate or personal.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
52. I changed my behaviors to avoid interacting with this person whenever possible.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
53. When this person was around me, I tried to ignore his/her presence.  1  2  3  4  5  6  7
54. I mentally thought less of this person, treating him/her as despicable or intolerable.  
55. When I was talking to this person, I would do things to keep the interaction as short as possible, such as pretending to agree, or not asking questions.  
56. I ignored this person's thoughts, feelings and intentions.  
57. When in this person's presence, I kept to myself and spoke less than I would have if I liked him/her.  
58. When this person was speaking, I humored (or tolerated) him/her by treating him/her as being less capable of acting responsibly than other people.  

**Spirituality and Forgiveness**  
Joseph (2007)  

Please respond to each of the items below, reflecting your belief with regards to attitude surrounding hurt from personal or relational transgression(s). Answer each item by circling the number next to the item that best describes your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Does Not Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59. God understands and will not condemn me for my negative emotion and resentment towards the person who hurt me  
60. I am guilt stricken for the negative thoughts and resentments I feel and display towards the person who hurt me.  
61. I concealed the behavior of the person who hurt me for fear of the repercussion it will have with the church community.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62. I fear(ed) rejection by the church if I come forward seeking help.  
63. The negative emotions are affecting my spiritual experience.  
64. I have difficulty praying due to negative thoughts from the hurt.  
65. I am angry at God for allowing the hurtful experience in my life.  
66. I thank God that the hurtful experience was not more serious than it was  
67. Because of prayer and the Bible I have not fallen apart.  

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68. I find renewed strength to deal with my hurt through the church services
    and fellowship
70. I have faith that God will eventually execute justice for my painful
    experience and hurt.
71. I can identify with Jesus who suffered though being innocent.
72. The forgiving examples of members within the church community
    make forgiving somewhat easier.
74. The church community seems to be the place where an unforgiving
    spirit exists.
75. I am encouraged that one day there will be no need of forgiveness
    because there will be no more hurt.
76. As a Christian I consider myself to be a forgiving person.
APPENDIX B

SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP

Three-hour Single Parents Forgiveness Workshop

a) The Cognitive (first session steps 1-3)

b) The Narrative (second session steps 4-6)

c) The Affirmative (third session steps 7 & 8)
SINGLE PARENTS’ FORGIVENESS WORKSHOP

GETTING PAST THE HURT
EIGHT STEPS

Ainsworth E. Joseph
Senior Pastor Kingsboro Temple
May 30, 2009

DEADLY EMOTIONS

Anger and Hostility:
• Hypertension
• Coronary Artery Disease
DEADLY EMOTIONS Cont’d

Resentment, Bitterness, Unforgiveness, and Self-Hatred:
- Autoimmune Disorders
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Lupus, and
- Multiple Sclerosis

Donald Colbert, M.D.

FACT FINDING #1

"Through the years we physicians have frequently seen patients go through emotionally devastating experiences such as divorce, bankruptcy, or the death of a child—only to see those patients experience heart attacks, recurrences of cancer, autoimmune disease, or serious crippling or disabling conditions."

Colbert, p4.
FACT FINDING #2

• "As physicians, however, the vast majority of us have been trained to separate emotions from physical disease. Our training teaches us that emotions are...well, emotional. Disease are strictly physical. Increasingly, however, we are having to confront the fact that the body cannot differentiate between stress that physical factors cause and stress that emotional factors cause. Stress is stress.

FACT FINDING #2 Cont’d

And the consequences of too much unmediated stress are the same regardless of the factors that led to a buildup."

ibid,
SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUR LIFE

Tsunamis & Earthquakes:
When such occur they forever change the landscape of the earth.

a. What's different in your life?
b. What factors created the change in your life?
c. Who is the person/s responsible and that you desire or need to consider forgiving?

MARKING THE BOUNDARIES

You have a right to your feelings but you do not have to remain feeling that way.

I feel _______ and _____________. There are other times I feel _________ and
_______________.

These are other emotions I experience:

_________________
_________________
_________________
DEPRESSURIZING

I have done:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________ in efforts to cope with the change the hurt has caused in my life.

PRESSURIZING

I Wish I could:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________ to make myself feel better than I experienced since the hurt.
LEARNING FROM THE PAST
SECURING THE PRESENT

How protected are you from a repeat offence? I have ________________.
In taking responsibility for self what measures have you taken to ensure personal safety? I have ________________.
What measures have you taken to ensure safety of minors in your custody and care? I have ________________.

RELEASING TRANSGRESSOR FOR MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Forgiveness here sees primary benefits for the person who was wronged. The transgressor is released from the emotional indebtedness of the offense. Reconciliation may or may not be possible at this point but you can forgive.
Note: There may be some restorative justice acts that cannot be overlooked (e.g. I forgive you but you still need to pay up the child—support).
RITULIAZING THE FORGIVENESS

The Bible Patriarchs marked high emotional and spiritual points in their lives with symbols such as altars, rocks etc.

Some ideas to consider:

1. Funeral/burial services
2. Burning
3. “Freezing and melting” (time to reconsider)
4. Writing with erasable pen or marker then cleaning slate
5. Writing and placing hurt and emotions on an river or ocean to sail away never more to return.

CELEBRATING YOUR NEW FREEDOM

There are practical things that can be done to mark the change. Consider as examples:

1. Physical make over
2. Begin dating again
3. Relocating
4. Going to school
5. Changing career
6. Thanksgiving program/party
SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIND AND BODY

"The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death."

Ellen G. White MH., 241
APPENDIX C

EVALUATION INSTRUMENT
Kingsboro Temple
of Seventh-day Adventists

SINGLE PARENTS' FORGIVENESS WORKSHOP

May 30, 2009

ASSESSMENT:

Gender:  Male  Female

Kindly rate your experience and perspective on benefit from participating in this workshop. Do not place your name or any identifying information on this sheet. Thanks for feedback.

Which of the following best describe your experience from participating in this forgiveness workshop?

Check one:

[ ] Very helpful
[ ] Helpful
[ ] Somewhat helpful
[ ] Not helpful
[ ] Not certain

On a scale of 1-10, circle the number that reflects where you think you are in forgiving.


Ainsworth E. Joseph
Senior Pastor
APPENDIX D

LETTERS OF REVIEW
June 12, 2009

Dear Pastor Ainsworth Joseph,

Thank you for the excellent workshop that you conducted with the Single Parent Ministry Group on May 30, 2009. As I mentioned at the close of your presentation, you are indeed an excellent educator. You delivered key concepts on working toward forgiveness with such ease and relativity. The personal experiences you shared helped many members understand that although we are Christians, forgiveness is not automatic, but a process in which we must be willing participants in order to reap the blessings and freedom it brings.

Throughout the week that followed, the calls streamed in from single parents who attended the workshop, expressing how much they appreciated the discussion and how they were richly blessed.

We look forward with anticipation to your follow-up on the issue of forgiveness and your continued work with us on other topics that will strengthen our Christian walk.

May God continue to richly bless you and your ministry!

Warm Regards,

Ngozi Nwankpa, MD
Single Parent Ministry Leader
April 1, 2010

Ainsworth E. Joseph  
Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists  
414 7th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11216

Dear Pastor Joseph,

On May 30, 2009, you were kind enough to join the Single Parent Ministry Group at Kingsboro Temple of Seventh-day Adventists for one of their monthly luncheon meetings. This group, in existence for approximately one year, is comprised of single parents who were never married, divorced or widowed. Some members were also second generation single parents. Prior to your arrival, the group had numerous discussions on the challenges Christian single parents face. These challenges included caring for their own needs, the needs of their children, letting go of past hurts and improving the relationship with their child’s parent.

When you arrived, the group was ready to address the issue of forgiveness. The Forgiveness Workshop was met with an open mind and excited discussion. Members of the group eagerly listened as the connections between mind and body were explored and possible tools to help facilitate the process of forgiveness were presented. Some group members signed up for the survey associated with your dissertation as well as expressed an interest in counseling to assist them in working through difficult problem areas.

As the Elder/Sponsor for the group and as a professional with a doctorate in Clinical Psychology, I was privy to the spontaneous feedback uttered by the group members. At the end of the workshop, a male member stated, “This is the best workshop we had so far this year...this is good stuff!”

I echo that sentiment. The workshop left a lasting impression on the group. In subsequent meetings, there was a decrease in the level of anger expressed over past failed relationships and a willingness to offer positive alternatives to current challenges. So, on behalf of the group, we thank you, Pastor Joseph, for the Forgiveness Workshop.

Sincerely,

Sajiha S. Sutton, Psy.D.
Good Morning Pastor,

Here is what I feel about the forgiveness program. When I attended the forgiveness workshop, my first thought was, “This seems like a good program however I don’t think it would help me much in a group setting.” There were many things I wanted to say, however they weren’t things I was willing to share in a group. When Pastor mentioned he was conducting one on one sessions for the purpose of gathering information, my eyes lit up and I volunteered to be the ‘guniea pig’ as some may say.

Having the one on one session was truly helpful to me. I wish I had access to a program like this years ago. Pastor was able to ask specific questions which made me think about things I wouldn’t normally have thought about. I tried before at forgiveness and it was not successful. Having the outline with steps on truly forgiving was an excellent help for me. I know I have truly experienced forgiveness after completing the program because when I talk about the past hurts, I don’t feel hurt; when similar experiences occur, I don’t think about the past experiences, I’m able to deal with that situation as an individual situation and not combine it with the past. The program causes you to face emotions you had hidden away. If you really want to learn how to effectively forgive, I recommend you try this program.
To: Pastor Joseph <praj63@earthlink.net>
Subject: A note of Thanks
Date: Jan 21, 2010 11:32 AM

Good Morning Pastor Joseph,

For the past few weeks it's been on my mind to reach out to you. And today I said I was going to drop what I was doing and make sure I send this e-mail.

I know I've said “thank you” before, but I wanted to say it again! This time it's not for anything in particular, I”’s just because!

Just because of who you are, I would like to say THANK YOU!

Just because you are someone who cares, I would like to say THANK YOU!

Just because you take time away from your family to meet the needs of others, I would like to say THANK YOU!

Just because you have dedicated your life to serving, I would like to say THANK YOU!

Too often we (members) reach out to our Pastor(s) only when we need something from them. Well, the only need I have today is the need to say THANK YOU for making a change in my life.

Don’t take for granted the gift God has given you! Have a WONDERFUL day!!

2/3/10

Dear Pastor Joseph,

The counseling helped to free me by forgiving my mother and father. It also helped me to see God’s love, in spite of the situation, in a different way. I didn’t have to be born but, I was allowed to be born. I am happy to be in the land of the living, and, I am going to live life to the full potential. I will encourage my friends and family to forgive themselves and others.
To: Ainsworth Joseph <praj63@earthlink.net>
Subject: Thank you!
Date: Feb 17, 2010 1:29 PM

Dear Pastor Joseph,

When I first came to you for counseling and the Forgiveness project, I have to say that I was very apprehensive. It wasn't the first time that I had started counseling for the same issue and I was afraid that the results would probably be the same—I would stop coming when the peeling back of the bruises became too painful to bear. Believe, it was not easy but for some reason, "Divine Intervention" stepped in and said, "It's time to finally let go of the past and step into your future".

So...here I am! I knuckled through the process and made it. Thank you so much for your time and patience in helping me to navigate through this process. You never pushed or forced and it helped that you allowed God to be the Captain. Forgiveness really frees the forgiver as much as the person is forgiven.

May God bless you as you continue to labor in His vineyard?

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To: praj63@earthlink.net
Subject: Forgiveness Thoughts
Date: May 5, 2010 4:00 PM
Attachments: Forgiveness.doc

On this journey, I have learned that forgiveness is more for me, than the person who has caused the pain. Learning to give and receive forgiveness has been a precious reward. I realize God commands this of me and it enables me to feel free to live and love again. Knowing that I have released myself and the people who have offended me really gives me a new outlook on life. Pastor Joseph has helped me immensely to get in tune with my feelings and be open and honest about how I felt. Looking back, I kept these emotions to myself and they did more harm than good. I am truly blessed and will apply these principles of forgiveness to my life as many times as I need to forgive.
To: praj63@earthlink.net  
Subject:  
Date: May 6, 2010 3:40 PM

Dear Pastor Joseph,

I would also like to thank you for opening this experience to me. I thought I had forgiven and was on my way, which was not completely true. I went through many of the steps that was taught on my own and thought I was done. I even was re-baptized as my final step of letting go of my past with my ex. I was wrong. You opened my eyes to the fact that I truly did not forgive. I learned this when I had to write the letter to my ex-husband and was teary eyed while writing it and reading it aloud. I still held him bad feelings toward him and didn't let everything go. As I went through the process it pointed out things to me that I didn't factor in before.

There was one thing that stood out to me the most that you stated, "I was a blanket". When I took a good look at my life that was so true it made me start changing my responses to situations. Thank You

When it comes to my ex I am free from the hard feelings. I am able to feel no more pain. I shed no more tears when things, people or situations of my past or present trigger old feeling. I no longer go back to my old way of handling the situation with some of the destructive behavior I engaged in. This is a wonderful feeling.

In my personal opinion as I look around at people I don't know, friends and family I see where process is necessary for them. Letting go would free them so much and change their responses to life and people.

I would like to offer my help to others. If at any time you need me to share or assist in any way in teaching this process or sharing my experience I am available. Thank You.
APPENDIX E
CORRELATIONS DOCUMENTATION

1 (59) God understands and will not condemn me for my negative emotions, and resentment towards the person who hurt me. This variable does not correlate with any other standardized variables of forgiveness, as measured by Yelsma, McCullough, or Hess.

2 (60) I am guilt stricken for the negative thoughts and resentments I feel and display towards the person who hurt me. This variable correlates (r = .004) with avoids talk with transgressor about hurt, by Yelsma. It appears that if one reports being guilty for negative thoughts they also avoid talking about the hurt with transgressor. Or. it appears that if one reports avoiding talking about the hurt with transgressor they experience guilt for negative thoughts.

3 (61) I concealed the behavior of the person who hurt me for fear of the repercussion it will have with the church community. This variable correlates (r = .002) with distancing from transgressor who hurt you, by Hess; and relates negatively (r = -.002) with feeling close to transgressor, by Hess.

4 (62) I fear(ed) rejection by the church if I come forward seeking help. This variable correlates (r = .05) with avoidance of transgressor, by MCCullough; (r = .05) with distancing from your transgressor, by Hess; (r = .044) with difficulty talking to transgressor, by Yelsma; and (r = .036) with anger talking toward transgressor, by Yelsma. It appears that if one reports fear of rejection by the church when seeking help, they are likely to distance self from the transgressor, has difficulty talking to transgressor, and has anger talk if they interact with transgressor.

5 (63) The negative emotions are affecting my spiritual experience. This variable correlates (r = .007) with difficulty talking with transgressor and (r = .068) with avoidance talk with transgressor, by Yelsma. It appears that if one reports that their negative emotions are affecting spiritual experience, they also have difficulty talking with transgressor.

6 (64) I have difficulty praying due to negative thoughts from the hurt. This variable correlates (r = .01) with difficulty talking, by Yelsma. It appears that if one reports that their difficulty praying due to negative thoughts, they also have difficulty talking with transgressor.
7 (65) I am angry at God for allowing the hurtful experience in my life. This variable correlates ($r = .01$) with revenge, by MCCullough; ($r = .03$) with difficulty talking, by Yelsma; ($r = .01$) with anger talk, by Yelsma. It appears that if one reports being angry at God for a hurtful experience, they are more likely to get even, have difficulty talking to transgressor, and engages in anger talk if they interact with transgressor.

8 (66) I thank God that the hurtful experience was not more serious that it was. This variable does not correlate with standardized variables of forgiveness—Yelsma, McCullough, or Hess.

9 (67) Because of prayer and the Bible I have not fallen apart. This variable correlates ($r = .04$) with forgiveness talk, by Yelsma. It appears that if one prays and reads the Bible, they also participate in forgiveness talk.

10 (68) I find renewed strength to deal with my hurt through the church services and fellowship. This variable correlates ($r = .04$) with forgiveness talk, and ($r = .040$) with avoidance talk with transgressor, by Yelsma.

11 (69) My hurt is a retribution for violating God’s commandments. This variable correlates ($r = .02$) with forgiveness talk, by Yelsma. Such individuals may talk negatively to self attributing blame. They may also use words through prayer in an effort to appease God.

12 (70) I have faith that God will eventually execute justice for my painful experience and hurt. This variable does not correlate with any other standardized variables of forgiveness—Yelsma, McCullough, or Hess.

13 (71) I can identify with Jesus who suffered being innocent. This variable correlates negatively ($r = -.04$) with distancing from your transgressor, by Hess. It appears that the attribution of suffering like Jesus merely focuses on the suffering and has no interest in relating to transgressor.

14 (72) The forgiving examples of members within the church community make forgiving somewhat easier. This variable correlates negatively ($r = -.04$) with revenge toward transgressor, by MCCullough.

There is no item 73.

15 (74) The church community seems to be the place where an unforgiving spirit exists. This variable does not correlate with any other standardized variables of forgiveness as measured by Yelsma, McCullough, or Hess.

16 (75) I am encouraged that one day there will be no need of forgiveness, because there will be no more hurt. Correlates negatively ($r = -.04$) with distancing oneself from transgressor, by Hess.
As a Christian I consider myself to be a forgiving person. This variable correlates negatively ($r = -.02$) with avoidance from transgressor, by MCCullough; negatively ($r = -.02$) with revenge toward transgressor, by MCCullough; negatively ($r = -.000$) with distancing self from transgressor, by Hess; ($r = .000$) with closeness with transgressor, by Hess; and negatively ($r = -.000$) with difficulty talking, by Yelsma. It appears that the 48 people who attend the church, and filled out a questionnaire, and reported being a Christian and a forgiving person, will be significantly less likely to:

1. avoid distance with transgressor,
2. are less interested in revenge,
3. are less likely to distance self from transgressor.
4. are more likely to be close to transgressor, and
5. may have less difficulty talking with transgressor.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


VITA

AINSWORTH EDDISON JOSEPH

Ainsworth E. Joseph hails from the twin Island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies. He graduated from the University of the Southern Caribbean 1988 (formerly CUC), where he obtained his initial preparation for the gospel ministry. In 1999, he graduated from Hofstra University with a Master of Science in Administration. In 1994, he completed post graduate studies in psychotherapy at Hofstra University and specialized as a clinical Marriage and Family Therapist. Ainsworth is currently pursuing the doctor of ministry leadership concentration at the Theological Seminary, Andrews University.

Ainsworth was ordained in 1993 and has been serving the church for 23 years. Joseph also cherishes the unique experience of becoming a recording artist along with Just for Praiz. This long-held vision materialized when they released the album "WORTHY" in 2004. In 2004, Ainsworth became the first recognized pastor of the year in the Northeastern Conference. Ainsworth was declared the pastoral delegate to the 2005 General Conference Session.

Over the years, Joseph held various positions: associate departmental director, pastor/evangelist, school board chairman, and member of a K-12 board. Joseph did 4 church plants, established 1 school, and supervised the construction of 5 church buildings and 1 school. His ministry resulted in over 1,400 souls being led to Christ. Over the past 19 years Joseph became known for his expertise in sponsoring and conducting marriage and family seminars and retreat camps in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Joseph has also ministered on the continents of Africa and the United Kingdom. Ministerial service spans two divisions of the world church.

Ainsworth holds membership in prestigious professional organizations such as the Northeastern Conference Ministerial Association in which he served as a vice president for three years. He is an Affiliate member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT), NYMFT, and LIMFT. Ainsworth is also a certified member of the judicial PEACE program (Parent Education and Custody Effectiveness) for divorcing families.

Married to Gillian for 20 years, they produced 3 beautiful and brilliant daughters: Kohren, Kohrissa, and Kohriese. Ainsworth is fascinated with the eagle and is inspired by "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isa 40:31 NKJV).