

# How Forgiveness Helps Us Enjoy Life

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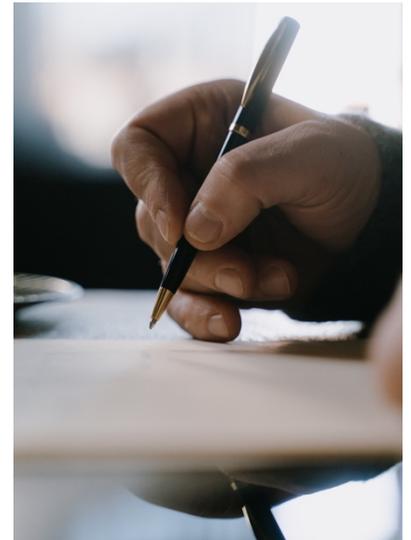
All of us experience situations, people, or events that fuel emotional pain. Forgiveness helps us release that pain to move forward into new opportunities. Traumatic memories—from hurts and rejection to relationship wounds—are stored in the brain's amygdalae and can be repeatedly reactivated by any of our five senses. **The choice to forgive** frees us from lingering resentments that can keep us mentally, physically, or emotionally stuck in the past. William Walton explained, “To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee.”

**Forgiveness is a transaction, a choice to obey God**—sometimes long before we feel like forgiving. (Altered feelings follow the decision to forgive.) Any time we forgive, we're releasing distressing burdens to God, and our lives are transformed, even when reconciling with your offender is impossible. God says, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord* (Romans 12:14, 17,19, NKJV).

Philip Yancey said, “In the final analysis, **forgiveness is an act of faith**. It is the belief that God can take care of the fairness problems. It is not fair just to pretend that something doesn't happen. It still hurts, it still stings. Forgiveness is not fair, but forgiveness is a way of taking that burden from us and giving it to God.”

## Writing forgiveness letters can help you heal and grow:

1. **List** the names or initials of **everyone you need to forgive** (if indicated, include yourself on your list). Pray Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to show you who to forgive. Plan to keep your letters concise and to the point.
2. In each forgiveness letter you **write**, briefly describe how you were hurt by the person's (or your own) actions, continually remembering God sees and cares. *You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless* (Psalm 10:14, NKJV).
3. **Do not send** your **letters** to the “recipients” but do use each letter as an opportunity to **release** past pain into God's loving care. When you finish writing your letters, shred them in a paper shredder or destroy them in some other way, consciously releasing each concern into God's unfailing love. **Being released from the past frees you to enjoy the present!**



The process of writing forgiveness letters can help you **remember your choice to forgive**. Any time you feel the sting of old wounds, tell yourself, “I distinctly remember forgiving that.” Even if those who wounded you have died, you can still write forgiveness letters to them, releasing bitterness, shame, rejection, or fear to the Good Shepherd's perfect care.

**Continue moving forward in forgiveness**, assured God hates evil and injustice in the world He designed to experience life, freedom, and love. *In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins* (1 John 4:10, AMP).

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For **additional ideas on forgiveness**, see **chapters six and seven** of *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdeljH>). You can also watch “Strengthening Your Core,” a 12 - video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW> or subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.