

Dag Heward-Mills

*Forgiveness
Made Easy*



Forgiveness Made Easy

By **Dag Heward-Mills**

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Publishers

E mail Dag Heward-Mills :

info@daghewardmillsbooks.org

evangelist@daghewardmills.org

Find out more about Dag Heward-Mills at:

<http://www.daghewardmills.org/>

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Preface

I know that I am a young man, and I know that I have not seen all there is to see in this life. However, in my short life I have experienced many wounds and hurts. I have also come to learn that learning to forgive is essential in moving along with God.

There are times I have stood in my pulpit claiming not to have a grudge against anyone while deep down, my heart was full of hurt. This is so for many, many Christians.

In my daily walk with Jesus, He has shown me how to be free from this syndrome of hurts and wounds. Indeed, the Bible makes it clear that offences shall surely come. But how can I expect God's forgiveness if I will not forgive?

I hope this book will be a blessing to you. Even as I read through this manuscript, the Lord ministered to me again the importance of obeying His Word.

Let us obey the Lord and receive His blessing.

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Chapter 1

Christian Forgiveness

And that ye put on the NEW MAN...

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:24, 31, 32

The Bible tells us that when we are born again, we become *"new men"*, or *"new creatures"*.

When a man becomes a doctor or an army officer, he is expected to behave in a certain way. In the same way, a certain pattern of behaviour is expected of anyone who claims to be a Christian or a "new man".

One of the primary qualities of a new man is that he forgives. The new man should not live in unforgiveness.

According to biblical principles, the new man must not live his life according to what goes on in this world. **In the world, people hardly forgive.** It is natural for a person not to forgive, but to seek revenge. However, when you become a new man, God expects you to forgive.

Indeed, one cardinal difference between the Christian and the unbeliever is that the Christian has the ability to forgive and release the offender.

A new man must be able to forgive!

Chapter 2

The Lord's Prayer Test

Now, how can you be sure that you have forgiven somebody? Often we say, "I have forgiven. I have nothing in my heart against him." **However, you will find that there is still a grudge you bear somewhere in your heart.**

As a pastor, I have stood in the pulpit and said that I had nothing against anybody. But in reality, I had *something* against someone. I thought that I had forgiven the person. Unknowingly, I had not. Later into the year, I realized that I really hadn't forgiven this person.

Through my search of the Scriptures, the Lord showed me what I call "The Lord's Prayer test". This is a test to prove whether you have truly forgiven your offenders.

The Test

Pray the Lord's Prayer. Keep praying. When you get to the point where you refer to those who trespass against you, you should **specifically mention the name of the person who offended you**. It is important to specifically mention the name of that person.

So the prayer becomes for example, **"...And forgive me for my trespasses, as I forgive Araba Lucy."** In other words, "If I have not forgiven Araba Lucy for her sins against me, **please do not forgive me!!!**"

If you are able to pray like that, asking God to forgive you specifically in relation to your forgiveness of certain people in your life, it is very likely that you have forgiven them. However, if you cannot mention the person by name in this prayer, then you have not forgiven!

Think of that man who promised to marry you. You waited for him for six years. But he deceived you and ruined your life. Remember, you need to forgive even him. Insert his name into The Lord's Prayer, to see whether you have really forgiven him.

Apply The Lord's Prayer test to every ugly or unpleasant situation you have ever encountered. This will help you to determine whether you have truly forgiven the person, because you need to do so!

Chapter 3

493 Trillion Versus 28 Thousand

Often, even as new people in Christ, Christians find it difficult to forgive, because they least expect that certain individuals would hurt them. The feeling is that if anybody would hurt them, it shouldn't be a particular person.

Sometimes best friends become worst enemies. Yes, even husbands and wives can become sworn enemies. The closest person who told you he loved and cared for you, can become your worst enemy.

As new people in Christ, we need to remember that God has forgiven us for lots of horrible things.

To illustrate this, Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant. He compared the Kingdom of God to a certain King who wanted to settle accounts with all his servants. One servant owed him 10,000 talents. When he was unable to pay, the King thought of selling him, his wife, children and all his property, but the servant begged for mercy.

...Lord, have patience with me...Then the lord... was moved with compassion, and...FORGAVE him the debt.

Matthew 18:26-27

However, this same servant found a fellow servant who owed him just 100 pence and immediately hell broke loose. Despite his cry for mercy, the unforgiving servant threw his fellow servant into prison, till he settled all his debts. This was reported to the King.

Then his Lord...said...O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt...Shouldest not thou also have had

compassion on thy fellow servant...? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors...likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matthew 18: 32-35

Talents could be either gold or silver talents.

One golden talent is worth approximately 29,085 US dollars. One talent of silver is equivalent to 1,920 US dollars.

10,000 gold talents is two hundred and ninety million, eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$290,850,000).

That is the amount that this young servant owed his master.

God has forgiven us \$290,850,000 and we are required to forgive our friends a few cents.

Perhaps, you think that you were not a bad person, even as an unbeliever. Maybe you were not a diamond thief or a drug pusher, so you think this does not apply in your case. It applies to everyone who has been a sinner before. Without raising a finger or uttering a word, man's heart is already wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

Sometimes, in talking about what somebody has done to us, we forget that we have also wronged God and man before. From God's point of view, a Christian who cannot forgive is rather strange.

God will forgive you if you murder, lie, fornicate, commit adultery, and practise witchcraft. **However, God will not forgive you if you bear someone a grudge.**

...forgive...that your Father also...may forgive you your trespasses.

Mark 11:25

That is the point at which God stops forgiving you.

If you have an unforgiving nature, the implications are far-reaching. It indicates that perhaps you are not a “new man”, or that you are just a pretending Christian.

Over the years, I have come to see and believe that unforgiveness is one sin that God will not forgive. It may be for you the difference between life and death. Moreover, the sin of unforgiveness is to me, even more dangerous than the sin of fornication.

Often, because unforgiveness is not seen physically, many Christians feel that they can get away with it. But it is deadly if it is left unchecked in your heart. God will not hear your prayer, and He will not prosper or bless you if unforgiveness lingers in your life.

God will be angry with you, because He forgave you, but you would not forgive others! Remember, the Bible tells us the Lord was wroth with His servant for not forgiving. In addition, the Bible says the man who did not forgive his brother was handed over to the tormentors.

Many Christians do not know why they are being tormented in this life. It could be because of unforgiveness.

Many times, we commit the same sins over and over again. Then we come to God expecting Him to forgive us.

God looks at our numerous sins and says, “Okay, I have forgiven you.” However, we come back with the same sin repeatedly and God has to forgive us.

Now, if we refuse to forgive our brothers in the same way, do you not think that God will be angry with us?

Chapter 4

Signs of Lingering Unforgiveness

Sometimes unforgiveness lingers on and on, even long after the offence has been committed. People even bear grudges against dead relatives and enemies. It is a dangerous condition!! What are the signs of lingering unforgiveness?

1. Malice

According to Ephesians 4: 31, one of the signs of unforgiveness is malice.

...and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice.

“Malice” according to the dictionary means, **“a desire to harm others”**.

When Brother “A” does something against you, and you have the desire to harm or hurt him, that is malice. **The desire to harm others shows you that you haven’t forgiven the offender.** When you have truly forgiven, you won’t desire to harm the person. Do you think God desires to harm you? Can you imagine what would happen to you if ever God should decide to harm you?

If you are a wife and you have a secret desire to harm or punish your husband, then that is malice. Sometimes wives punish their husbands by denying them sex. Some women cannot “commit” love with their husbands because of something they did. I have heard some women complain, “I can’t bring myself to take off my clothes and do this with him. I’ll go crazy if I have to sleep with him again.”

Once you feel this way, you have not forgiven.

One way you can tell that you have not forgiven, **is when you feel uncomfortable at the mention of the offender's name.** At the point when you can say, "Lord, I let him go," or "God will take care of it," then malice is gone. **When you curse the offender, wish him ill or plan how to hurt him, then malice is still lingering.**

You might complain and wonder why people hurt you so often. That is not the point! God expects us to forgive. **Malice must go away!**

2. Anger

The dictionary defines "*anger*" as "*a strong feeling of hostility and displeasure*".

I remember one lady came with her husband to the church office. The husband said something which was not exactly complimentary about his wife. She exploded. The hostility was so glaring, and her behaviour was so bad that her husband rebuked her, "Is this the way to talk? Don't you respect the pastor?" he asked her.

Then I sensed that the strong feelings of hostility between the husband and the wife were because of unforgiveness.

If you have this strong feeling of hostility whenever you see someone who once offended you, then there is some unforgiveness lingering in your heart.

3. Wrath

"Wrath" can also be defined as "**extreme anger**".

One sign of the presence of extreme anger is that the person begins to act "wild".

Once, a man was so angry that he threw all the lunch that had been set before him on the wall. Afterwards, when tempers had cooled down, he had to struggle to clean the stained wall (anger really makes you do some foolish things)!

Extreme anger or wrath is a sign of lingering unforgiveness.

4. Clamour

The dictionary defines “clamour” as **“loud abusive language, and loud demands or protests”**.

How can you come to church so nicely dressed, looking so sweet and holy, and then go home and quarrel everyday with everyone?

If your next-door neighbour decides to record the string of loud abuses, your pastors would be surprised at your behaviour. I believe that a Christian should not be loud and abusive in any circumstance. **Clamour or loud abusive language is a sign of lingering unforgiveness.** I know of a Christian church where there was so much disharmony that the pastors fought openly in church. They shouted at each other, and even used tear gas on each other. What a disgrace!

5. Evil speaking or slander

To “slander” is **“to say bad things about someone, or to backbite”**.

When someone slanders another person, usually what is said about that person is false. **Those who slander, often have the intention of destroying another person.** People who slander their spouses must be watched very carefully. Slandorous people are often full of bitterness. There may be genuine complaints. But when it is continuous, then such a spouse has a deep-seated problem of unforgiveness.

A husband once complained to me, “Pastor, my wife is very wicked. In fact, she is a witch! If you have ever seen a witch before, you’ll know what I’m talking about.”

I told him, “Then you must have been a wizard to have married her!” **I take particular notice of people who**

say negative things to bring others down.

I have heard pastors speak carelessly and negatively about other ministers. Sometimes these are people with whom they claim to have a good relationship. I take particular notice of such ministers.

From my own experience, I have come to know that, “He who talks to you about others will talk to others about you.”

6. Bitterness

“Bitterness” can be defined as **“degenerated unforgiveness”**. I define bitterness as a “long-standing degenerated unforgiveness”.

The word “degenerate” is defined as “to pass into a worse state than one which is considered normal or desirable”. Thus, when a situation passes from one stage to a worse state, it can be described as degeneration. Unforgiveness which stays in your heart for a long period of time, degenerates into bitterness. **The cardinal sign of bitterness is that it begins to poison other people.** The Bible cautions that when bitterness is permitted, it will spill over and defile others.

...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Hebrews 12:15

I know some people who are so filled with hatred for their wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, or other relatives.

A good example of a bitter person is a woman who has been hurt by a man.

The story line is often similar: The man approached you and told you, “I love you honey. You are the sweetest lady I’ve ever known, and I want to love you. When I saw you, my heart moved from the left to the right. I want you to know that if you were on the other side of the

Mediterranean, I would swim across just to bring you some ice cream!"

Perhaps he also said, "There is only one pebble I see whenever I walk on the beach and THAT IS YOU!"

You believed it when he told you he had seen many ladies, but that you were different. What you didn't know was that he had other pebbles on the beach, and that he had told other ladies these same stories.

You were a virgin and wanted to remain so until you got married, but he convinced you to give in to him, with the promise that he would marry you anyway. So he began sleeping with you. You did things you never dreamt of doing with your body. In fact, you also had to commit several abortions because you were not ready for babies.

Then, one day, he lets out the bomb that he cannot marry you after all. So many suitors wanted to marry you at the prime of your youth, but you refused them because of this "sweet talker". After you turned thirty-eight, most men shied away from you.

Now, you bear this man a grudge. You begin to hate him. Soon, you begin to hate him with a passion. With time, you have come to hate all men.

You could not forgive that man, so you have lumped all men into this category. Your hurt has become a long-standing degenerated type of unforgiveness bitterness.

Sometimes, such people begin to champion women's causes out of bitterness. They may remain unmarried for the rest of their lives. It can even develop and degenerate further into lesbianism. Lesbians are often bitter women; bitter against men who perhaps hurt them sometime in their lives.

Men can also be bitter against women. I remember a London taxi driver told me of his experience. Because of

this experience he had vowed never to marry.

He once had a live-in girlfriend whom he looked after. He took her to school, paid her fees, fed her and gave her everything she wanted for years. If she wanted anything, all she needed to do was to ask. She was almost like a wife. Then at a point, he began to suspect her of infidelity.

So one day, he told her that he was going on a business trip and would return after a week. To be certain that she would believe his story, he asked her to see him off. He went to the Kings Cross Station with her, got on a train and waved goodbye to her. However, at the next stop he got down, took another train and returned into town.

He did not go straight back home, but went to a drinking pub to while away the time till two a.m. Then he went home. When he climbed upstairs and entered the bedroom, here was his “girlfriend-wife”, in his bed with another man. Both of them were stark naked in *his* bed. So he threw her out of his flat, naked, and called the police.

After this experience he decided never to get married or to trust any woman. He could not forgive that girl, and he had now extended it to all other women. When such hurt degenerates into hatred, it is bitterness! Beware of becoming bitter after bad experiences! When a bitter person speaks, it affects, influences and poisons others.

Dear friend, as you read this, ask yourself: Am I bitter?

Chapter 5

Forgiveness Made Easy

Why is it so difficult for people to forgive?

Often, hurting people find it difficult to forgive because they cannot believe that the offender was the same person they trusted so much. This could explain the unwillingness of some spouses to forgive when their husbands or wives cheat on them.

Sometimes the emotional pain one goes through is almost unbearable, and as human beings it is not easy to forget. Though we may find it difficult to forgive, what God is saying to us is that it is very important to forgive no matter how traumatic the pain may be.

I want to share with you six steps that will make forgiveness easier for you.

1. Analyse the offender.

There is the need to analyse the offender very well that is, the person who did whatever to hurt you. Luke 23:34 gives an example of Jesus analysing the offenders. He said,

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...

As the people were killing and destroying Him, He looked at them and said, "Father, forgive them."

Jesus was not just forgiving them Himself. He had gone a step further, and was asking someone else to forgive them for the evil that they had done to Him.

The Son of God explained why they needed to be forgiven: because "they know not what they do."

If you analyse the offender, you will realize that although he is doing evil, **he may not be fully aware of the implications of his action.** As soon as you analyse it this way, it will help you relate well with whoever offends you.

Let me share with you a personal experience. I remember when one of my junior pastors was extremely rude to me. This pastor spoke in a way he should never have spoken least of all, to me. He shouted and threatened me. I was then sitting with one of my senior associate pastors.

As this was going on, I looked at him and I said to myself, "He does not know what he is doing."

As he continued displaying and behaving in an unbecoming manner, I said to myself, "I am very sure he doesn't know what he is doing. Maybe he is confused or disturbed."

Later on, my associate said he thought I would dismiss him immediately, because the junior pastor's behaviour was appalling.

However, I made the excuse for him that he did not know what he was doing or he would not have behaved in this way and it helped me to relate with him.

Learn to make excuses for people. Jesus made excuses for His own murderers! Perhaps your offender is sick, ignorant or confused.

If you are able to analyse those who offend you in this way, you will be able to forgive them. **By analysing in this way, you will find that you have the capacity within you to forgive.**

It helps you to understand why a person behaves in a particular way. Otherwise, you can never forgive.

2. Analyse your past sins.

When you analyse your past sins, you will find out that you will not be so hasty to judge anybody.

This is because you might have done the same thing (or something worse) before. Probably, you might have acted the same way if you had been confronted with the same issue.

Galatians 6:1 cautions:

...If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

When you consider yourself, you will be more willing to forgive. When you think about your past sins, you will realize that you are not any better.

In the time of Jesus, some people who felt they were “holier” brought a woman who had been caught in adultery. They wanted to punish her by stoning her. Jesus, who understood this principle of analysing people’s past, asked for any man who had not sinned to throw the first stone. No one dared throw a stone because they all knew they had past sins.

When you consider your own self you will not be so hasty to judge other people.

As a born-again believer, you should be forgiving, especially when unbelievers offend you. *Just remember what you did as an unbeliever.*

If it had not been for Christ, perhaps you would have done worse things.

Jesus said, “Father, forgive the unbelievers for they know not what they do.”

So analyse your past when you find it difficult to forgive your neighbour.

3. Analyse the outcome.

Out of jealousy and hatred, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. After thirty years, God raised him from prison to become the Prime Minister of Egypt.

Unaware of his new identity, his brothers came to him for help during a severe famine. Later, Joseph revealed himself to them. With remorse, they fell down and begged him to be merciful to them.

Joseph forgave them when he analysed the outcome of their misconduct.

...be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life...to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives...it was not you that sent me hither, but God:...

Genesis 45:5, 7, 8

Sometimes, when you analyse the way things have turned out, or the way things are going to turn out, you can easily forgive.

I remember that years ago, when I founded my church as a young medical student, I invited a pastor from one of the great charismatic churches in Ghana, to come to my church and minister.

This man of God who had been preaching and encouraging us in my little fellowship at the university for many months, sent a message to me that, *he would not "sow amongst thorns"*. Upon starting a church, I had suddenly been rejected by a man of God I highly respected.

So I asked myself, "When did we become 'thorns'?" He had been preaching in my fellowship of "thorns" for many months! I was very surprised, because I thought then, that he was my friend.

Instead, he rather influenced my associate to leave me and the church. This almost broke up the baby church. He then

told my associate to be careful not to associate with someone who was not *“called”*.

This departure of my immediate assistant generated all sorts of problems among my own church members, *who now began to analyse me; whether I was “called” or not.*

That was not the only trial. I was also under fire everywhere. Some of my classmates in the medical school called me names, as I carried the church drums and instruments to and from the church.

“Why should you start a church? Who are you? Who do you think you are?” they asked me.

When I was going to get married, my parents-in-law went to see one pastor to ask to use his church facilities for our wedding.

The Lighthouse Chapel International did not have a church building then. He told them that he would allow us to use his church only on the condition that we close down our church. I had no friends anymore.

I remember inviting all the pastors I knew to my wedding. Believe it or not—no one showed up. When pastors were called to take photographs with the bridal train, there were none. I was completely rejected. It was as though I was evil. People just threw me away for starting a new church. At a point I felt like committing suicide.

However, now I realize that the Lord wanted me to be independent of man’s help and praise. The Lord wanted me to stand on my own, go through the pains that I had to go through, and rise up to bear a particular fruit in His kingdom.

Today, the “small rejected” church has expanded not only in Ghana, but has branches all over the world. **It worked!**

Recently, I saw some of these people who rejected me and I told them exactly what Joseph said to his brothers: “You

meant it for evil but God turned it out for good.” God knows that I don’t bear them any grudge. These people are all my friends today, because God has helped me to forgive them. When you look at the outcome, you realize that you have the ability to forgive!!

4. See the disadvantages of unforgiveness.

Are there any disadvantages of unforgiveness?

YES!

God will not forgive you for any of your sins, and you are not going to have any prayer answered. Moreover, the devil will torment you.

Powerful men of God may lay hands on you, but the tormentors will still be there.

I heard of a pastor’s wife who was suffering from multiple sclerosis. She had suffered emotional hurts from within and without the church. She could not forgive those who had criticized her husband. (Sometimes it is the pastors’ wives who endure a lot of ministerial hurts and pains).

When her husband travelled, God ministered to her to forgive. When she forgave those people who hurt her, she received her healing miraculously. To her husband’s utter surprise, here she was, standing at the airport waiting for him when he returned from a trip. This was a wheelchair-bound woman; and there she was, free from unforgiveness and therefore free from multiple sclerosis.

The tormentors can have access to torment us with sicknesses, diseases, poverty, and marital disharmony, when we do not release those who hurt us. Could that explain your lack of breakthroughs?

This is the price you will pay for unforgiveness.

5. See the advantages of forgiveness.

One of the major advantages of forgiveness is that forgiveness makes you a great person! Not only will your prayers be answered but you become more powerful spiritually, physically and emotionally.

Forgiveness makes you a great person.

The former South African President, Nelson Mandela is considered one of the greatest men in the world because of forgiveness.

Mandela was sent to prison for twenty-seven years, by the apartheid white government. He was separated from his home, his wife and children. He spent the better part of his life in prison. This is a man, who under normal circumstances should not forgive, but he was able to forgive his white oppressors and he formed a reconciliatory government with them. This is what makes him great.

In forgiving, you become great.

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