

# Forgiving Self and Others

By Patti Soileau



# The Goals of Forgiveness

There was a story written about a family who had a son killed by a drunk driver. They were Christians and were faced with either living a life of bitterness or forgiving this young man. They not only forgave him, but also took him in as their own son. That is a picture of perfect forgiveness. God had done a great work in their hearts and used it in many lives in the years to come. Forgiving this young man enabled them to share God's great love and forgiveness to others.

Ephesians 4:32  
And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

You will be faced with the problem of forgiveness many times in your life. You, just like this family must decide to either live a life of bitterness or forgive the person who has caused your pain. It is not easy to forgive, but an unforgiving heart will cause you more problems and more pain than the hurt itself.

As we discuss the subject of forgiveness, we will try to answer all your questions. You will face those who have hurt you. Then you must make an important decision; to forgive or not to forgive them. There cannot be healing in your life until you have forgiven them.

## THE GOAL OF FORGIVENESS

The goal of forgiveness is always to restore fellowship with the person (Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D, My Father's Child, page 52-53). This is a good goal, but not always possible. You can still forgive the person even if you cannot reach the goal of restoring the relationship. In most cases, you and the person can be restored to fellowship. The problem has been dealt with and you can continue with your relationship. We should work hard at restoring fellowship with the person who we have forgiven.

In some cases, it is impossible to restore and be friends with the person you have forgiven. Let me give you some examples. A young lady came into my office and shared her story with me. Her father had raped her. This continued until she left home at age 18. Anytime she came home, this would continue to happen. She worked through this terrible hurt and eventually forgave him. To go back and visit him would be stupid. This person hurt her physically and would do it again if he could. Had she forgiven him? Yes. Could she restore their relationship? No, he needs

Who do you need to forgive?

Do you have a problems with forgiving others?

# Restoring Your Fellowship

to take care of his problem and must stop the abuse before their relationship can be restored and even then this relationship would be hard to restore.

What plans do you have to restore your fellowship with the person you have forgiven?

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In other cases, the person has stopped the abuse but to return at this time brings too much pain. You do not have to stand in the same room with or stand face to face with the person in order to forgive them. In cases of sexual or physical hurt, it is too painful to be around the person. Sometimes the danger is still there. To say you cannot forgive unless you are willing to have the same relationship with the person is wrong. Sometimes, the consequences of the sin cause the relationship to change. Restore if possible, but do not use it as a proof of forgiveness.

In other cases, it is not possible to try and restore the relationship. Sometimes the person who has hurt you is in the past. They are no longer a part of your life. They may even be dead. There is no way to have a relationship with them. Forgive them and go on with your life.

In dealing with my past, I had to forgive many people for the things they did to me. With some of them, I have been able to restore our fellowship. For some of the others, this has been impossible. What makes the difference? Sometimes I chose to not rebuild a relationship. Being around them brought too much hurt. Satan uses them in my life to defeat me, and cause me to remember my pain. It can cause old feelings of resentment to come back. The Bible reminds us to stay away from anything that causes us to think or do things that are not pleasing to the Lord. It is okay to stay away if it hinders your healing or your Christian life. Again, restore if it is at all possible.

What hinders your restoring the fellowship with the person you have forgiven?

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Sometime restoring your relationship takes time. You may need time to regain trust in the person. You may need time for them to demonstrate to you that they have changed. Forgive them and work on restoring your relationship if possible. Forgive them and let God take care of the rest. Not only will God work in their hearts, but He will work in your heart too. He will help you forgive them. He will continue working in your life so you

# Wrong Thinking Concerning Forgiveness

God wants you to forgive because:

- Forgiveness will help you get on with your life.
- Forgiveness will release you from your resentment and hate.
- Forgiveness can change your focus from other people to making your life better.
- Forgiveness will give you freedom from the responsibility of judging.
- Forgiveness will help you find happiness and peace in your life.
- Forgiveness will restore your relationship with God.
- Forgiveness will cause growth in your spiritual life.
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Thoughts on this topic are taken from "My Father's Child" by Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D

will no longer hate the person who has hurt you. He will help you as you try to restore the relationship. It is God doing the work in your heart. You forgive and He will do the rest. Trust Him and don't worry about anything else.

I struggled with several things when I was faced with forgiving those who hurt me. Many of these same things have kept people from ever forgiving others. Some think, as I did, that if I forgive them I am saying what this person did was okay or what they did wasn't wrong (Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D, My Father's Child, page 51). This is wrong. What this person did was sin. It is never okay to hurt another person and cause them to be in pain. It is never okay with God. It doesn't mean that He looks at it as not being important or no big deal. It is a very important to God. He wants you to forgive because it will help you get on with your life. He wants you to be happy. He wants you to let Him deal with this person. Forgiveness will release you from all the resentful and hate toward the person. Forgiveness puts God in charge of the person, not you.

Another area of wrong thinking is if I forgive them, this person will not pay for their sins (Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D, My Father's Child, page 60). We want to punish them. As I talk to others, they tell me that they killed the person in their minds. Some even plan ways to get even with the person. This only hurts you. The person is not feeling anything. This kind of thinking only brings more pain in your life.

We must learn that it is not our responsibility to punish the person. They must answer to God for their sins. God is responsible for punishing sin (Romans 12:19) "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord". He is the Judge. God is the perfect Judge. He knows how to judge sin much better than we do. To forgive someone does not mean you are letting him or her off too easily. It simply means that you will stop trying to punish them and let God do the judging. I was teaching a Bible class on this subject

# The Person and Forgiveness

and as I spoke, a lady yelled out, "You don't understand what this person did". Many believe some things can't be forgiven. For so many years, I felt I could not forgive some of the horrible things those close to me did. It does not matter who the person was that hurt you. It does not matter what the person did to you. You are still to forgive them. Forgiveness is not based on how bad or deep the hurt was. Forgiveness is not based on knowing the person or them being a total stranger. Does that sound cold and hard to you? I say this because you must forgive to be at peace. There is no peace or healing without forgiveness. You must release this person into God's hands.

Forgiveness is not based on how bad or deep the hurt was.

Forgiveness is not based on whether the offender deserves forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not based on the other person.

You should forgive because God says to forgive others.

Thoughts on this topic are taken from "My Father's Child by Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D

You may say they don't deserve my forgiveness. This kind of thinking will keep you from forgiving the people who have hurt you. Do they deserve your forgiveness? No! They don't deserve your forgiveness nor do they deserve God's forgiveness. If you think of it, you didn't deserve God's forgiveness either. No one deserves forgiveness. I deserve punishment for my sins. I thought about all the people I have hurt. I surely don't deserve anything from them. I deserve punishment from God; not His mercy. What they deserve is to face the Almighty God, the Righteous Judge. For many years, I was trying to punish and judge this person for all the hurt they caused in my life. When you forgive the person, it is God's responsibility to judge them. Your forgiving them isn't saying they deserve your forgiveness, but it is up to God to judge them. Judging takes a lot of your energy and pulls you away from where you want to be.

Many people will not forgive until the person says they are sorry. Your forgiveness should not be based on the other person. It should not be based on their confession of wrongdoing or their willingness to change their actions. If you wait until they say they are sorry, then you may never forgive them. I forgave my father and he never told me he was sorry. If the person said these words it would make it easier; but don't wait or expect it. We are to forgive whether they say I am sorry or not.

There are many reasons why people choose not to forgive. Why don't you want to forgive the person who has hurt you? Examine your reasons for not forgiving someone. What is

# The Consequences of not Forgiving

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Consequence  
of not forgiving?

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your reason? Make sure your lack of forgiveness is not caused by your wrong thinking about forgiveness:

- 1) Forgiveness does not mean that what the person did was okay.
- 2) If I forgive them they will not be held accountable for their sins.
- 3) I am responsible for making them accountable.
- 4) They don't deserve my forgiveness.
- 5) I will not forgive them until they repent or say they are sorry.

What if you don't forgive them? What if you stop working on dealing with your hurts and people in your life? There are many people who come to this point and say to me, "I just can't forgive this terrible thing they did to me". What are the consequences of not forgiving the person?

There are many consequences for our unwillingness to forgive others. All these consequences hurt you, not the other person. God says we are to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32, Mark 11:25, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 18:35). It doesn't matter what they did or did not do. It doesn't matter if they deserve it or not. It doesn't matter if they stop the abuse or continue doing it. It doesn't matter who they are. God tells us to forgive.

Is it worth it to  
forgive this  
person?

If we don't forgive, then we are disobeying God and that will bring punishment from our God. Our fellowship with God will be broken and our prayer life will be destroyed. There will be no spiritual growth in our life nor will there be any peace in our life. We will not be able to work through these past pains in our life therefore becoming a bitter old person. Every person in our life will be affected by our unwillingness to forgive this person.

Forgiving others  
helps you  
to go on  
with your life.

Is it worth it to forgive this person? Can you see that the unforgiving spirit will cause you more pain than the person who hurt you? They have gone on with their life and you are still hurting. God wants you to forgive, because it gives you freedom and brings you peace. It releases you from the responsibility of feeling you need to punish the person.

# The Meaning of Forgiveness

Forgiveness means you must let go of the resentment and hate you feel for this person. As I worked through forgiving those who hurt my family and me, I went to the Lord and shared how and why I hated that person. Then I asked the Lord to help me forgive them. In some cases, I needed to ask the Lord to help me even be willing to forgive them. It is not easy letting go of the hate. Hate will only eat at your soul and destroy your life. God will take the hate, if you will only give it to Him.

## What does it mean to forgive?

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Forgiveness really has two parts. First, forgiveness is letting go of the resentments and hate. Then forgiveness also, means to give the person to God. To forgive someone is simply putting that person in God's hand to judge him or her. You release yourself from trying to hurt or punish the person. You are saying you are not the judge anymore. God is the judge.

When you realize that you are no longer the judge, you must also accept several other facts. God becomes the Judge. He has the right to do whatever He wants to do with the person. He may forgive their sins or He may choose to punish them. You must accept God's judgment whether you agree or not. Revelation 16:7, "Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments". Whether He is punishing man for his sin or showing mercy, His judgments are true and righteous. We have no right to question His judgments.

His holiness demands His judgments. His great wisdom knows the person and the future. His love causes people to change and He alone knows everything about the situation. You must trust the Righteous Judge to take care of your situation, because He can judge the person much better than you can.

I often wonder what those I have hurt would feel when they heard that I am a pastor's wife and a counselor. I am sure they might feel that God should have punished me greatly for all the sins and hurt I did to them, but God showed me great mercy and dealt so gently with me. I really did not have to pay for my sins. I should have had some consequences, but I didn't. I am not sure why God was so merciful to me. I am just thankful.

Thoughts on this topic are taken from "My Father's Child" by Lynda D. Elliott & Vicki L. Tanner, PH.D

Why should you let God do the judging?

# Forgiving the Person

You will struggle with this issue of forgiveness. Without forgiving the person, there will be no peace for you. Start by asking the Lord to help you to be willing to forgive.

II Corinthians 2:10-11

Now whom you forgive anything, I (Paul) also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Who will take advantage of us if we do not forgive others?

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Don't let Satan keep you from peace!!

## Working on Forgiveness:

- Share with God your feelings toward the person.
- Share with God what the person did to you.
- Ask God to work in your heart and help you to forgive this person.
- Make a decision to forgive this person.
- Give this person to God to judge and deal with.
- Then let the person go and go forward in your life.

I realize how hard it is to forgive others for all the terrible things they did to you. Trust God to help you. Forgive Those who that have hurt you. You will be amazed how God will work in your heart. He will take the hate and replace it with His love. He will heal your broken heart and give you peace. Forgiveness is a part of your healing.

Trust your God who saw all the person did to you. Trust Him to do what is right. He knows what He is doing and He loves you so much. He does not want you to struggle anymore.

Make a decision today to forgive others for the things they did to you. Then go forward in your life leaving the past hurts behind you. God loves you and offers you total forgiveness in your life and He wants you to forgive others. Forgiving others will bring peace and happiness in your life.

**Forgiveness will bring you peace.**

**Choose today to forgive.**



# Forgiving Yourself

## Working on Forgiving self:

- ✓ Share with God your feelings.
- ✓ Share with God what you have done.
- ✓ Ask God to work in your heart.
- ✓ Make a decision to forgive yourself.
- ✓ Memorize some verses on forgiveness. Then remind yourself that God has forgiven you and you have too.
- ✓ Seek out those you have hurt and ask for their forgiveness.
- ✓ Let it go...you have been forgiven.
- ✓ Go forward and learn from your sins.

Have you  
forgiven  
yourself?

Before we leave this subject of forgiveness, we must discuss one more thing. Another person you need to forgive may be yourself. You must forgive the person's who hurt you and that may include yourself.

Can you imagine a person getting into a boxing ring without an opponent? Picture a fight where you are hitting yourself over and over again. With each punch, you are causing pain and damage to your body. You feel the excruciating pain, you want to stop the hitting, but for some reason you just keep throwing your fist into your face.

I know this is a silly illustration and you probably are saying no one would beat up themselves. Do you realize when you do not forgive yourself that is exactly what you are doing...getting into the ring without an opponent. For years, I did this. I felt like I need to punish myself for all the terrible things I had done.

You can never undo the sins or mistakes of your past. You can not change the past. The only thing you can do with your past is to learn from your mistakes and forgive yourself for all your sins. People feel like if they hurt or punish themselves that will help...it doesn't. You are only hindering your life. Since we can never pay or make up for the wrong in our past, we are wasting valuable time.

You need to decide that you must seek forgiveness of your past sins and let it go. This will bring you peace and freedom to live your life.

God has offered you forgiveness of your sins. You don't need to punish yourself anymore. God's forgiveness is waiting for you (Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 1:18, I John 1:9, Colossians 1:14, 2:13-14, Ephesians 1:7). There are so many verses that teach us that the price has been paid for our sins. The worksheets on God's Free Gift Of Salvation will help you understand God's forgiveness (just ask for these worksheets).

By admitting I am guilty and confessing my sins, God forgives and pronounces me not guilty anymore. This forgiveness of self helps you so you can go on with your life. I no longer need to beat myself for the things I did and I am free from my all guilt. Dealing with guilt is so easy. Admit you have sinned and confess your sins. God forgives you and your guilt is gone. My past sin

# A Decision to Forgive

are gone and I am only responsible for what I do today.

It will help you if you will memorize some verses on forgiveness. When you are tempted to beat yourself up just stop and remind yourself that God has forgiven you. Learn to let it go...you have been forgiven. Go forward and learn from your sins.

I know it is difficult to forgive yourself for all the sins and mistakes you have committed. Trust God to help you . Forgiveness of yourself is a part of your healing.

Make a decision today to forgive yourself for the things you have done. Then go forward in your life leaving the past sins behind you. God loves you and offers you total forgiveness in your life and He wants you to forgive yourself. Forgiving yourself will bring peace and happiness in your life.

By admitting  
I am guilty and  
confessing my  
sins, God  
forgives and  
pronounces  
me not  
guilty!

Justified means  
"I am not guilty"

God has paid the price for your forgiveness.  
If you have received that forgiveness:  
You are forgiven of all your sins.  
You are declared not guilty.  
You will never be judged for your past sins.  
You stand before God as a righteous person.  
Now He wants you to forgive others.  
He wants you to forgive yourself.

# Thoughts on Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another,  
tenderhearted, forgiving one  
another, just as God in Christ  
also forgave you.

Colossians 3:13

Bearing with one another, and  
forgiving one another, if anyone  
has a complaint against  
another; even as Christ forgave  
you, so you also must do.

## Thoughts on forgiveness

- Forgiveness does not erase your memory.
- Forgiveness is not saying what the person did was okay.
- Forgiving the person does not mean you must restore your relationship.
- The goal of forgiveness is to restore the relationship but it is not proof that you have forgiven the person.
- We are commanded by God to forgive others.
- Our forgiveness is not based on the other person.
- Your forgiveness is not based on:
  - ✓ Who did this?
  - ✓ What the person did to you?
  - ✓ Whether they said they are sorry.
  - ✓ Whether they repented of their sins.
- Forgiveness is letting go of the hate and resentment you feel toward that person.
- Forgiveness is giving them to God to judge.

List all the people you need to forgive and why (include yourself and God).

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List the reasons why you do not want to forgive them.

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Why should you forgive them?

- They deserve forgiveness.
- God commands me to forgive them.
- What they did was no big deal.
- They said, "I am sorry".

What does it mean to forgive them?

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B. \_\_\_\_\_

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Are you willing to forgive that person in your life?



# Man is Accountable to God

Romans 2:16

In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.

Acts 17:31

Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.

Acts 10:42

And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

Romans 2:12

For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:36

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.

John 5:24

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

## Answer these questions.

If you forgive them, will they be held accountable for their sins? Why or why not?

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Why is it wrong to wait for the person to say they are sorry before you forgive them?

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What is wrong with this statement, "I am responsible for making them accountable?"

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Will God judge mankind?

Romans 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 9:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 17:31 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 10:42 \_\_\_\_\_

What will God judge mankind for:

Romans 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 2:12 \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 6:23 \_\_\_\_\_

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John 3:36 \_\_\_\_\_

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John 5:24 \_\_\_\_\_

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Everyone must stand before God and give account of their life.

# God's Forgiveness

Ephesians 1:7  
In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Colossians 2:13-14  
V. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

V. 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Colossians 1:14  
In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

John 5:24  
Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

God offers you a free gift of salvation.

- You are a sinner. You can do nothing to earn salvation.
- Christ died for you. His death is the payment for your sins.
- You must ask and accept God's gift of salvation.

Are you a Christian?

When did you become a Christian?

When you came to God and asked for His free gift of salvation, what happened to your sins?

Ephesians 1:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 2:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 1:14 \_\_\_\_\_

John 5:24 \_\_\_\_\_

As Christian, you can take care of your guilt:

- ✓ Admit to God that you have sinned (Name your sin).
- ✓ Ask God to forgive you.
- ✓ Believe God's Word concerning your confessed sins. (I John 1:9)
- ✓ Forgive yourself.
- ✓ Go forward in your Christian life.

If God forgives you, Why should you not forgive yourself?

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Why is it important to deal with your guilt and forgive yourself?

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You can forgive yourself...  
God has forgiven you!

# Forgiving Yourself

Mark 11:25-26

V. 25 And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses .

V. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

- Luke 6:37  
"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

- 1 Peter 3:7  
Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

- Psalm 66:18  
I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

- Romans 8:1  
There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Have you forgiven yourself for your past sins? List the sins that you have not forgiven.

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How will not forgiving yourself hinder your Christian life?

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How will not forgiving others hinder your Christian life?

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Who wants you not to forgive yourself? Why?

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What is keeping you from forgiving yourself for your past sins?

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# Rebuilding Relationships

Galatians 6:1-2

V. 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. V. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ

Ephesians 5:1-2

V. 1 Therefore be followers of God as dear children. V. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.

James 2:8

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well;

I John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

I Thessalonians 4:9

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one.

Can you rebuild your relationship with this person?  
Why or Why not?

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List the people you need to rebuild a relationship with.

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Make some plans that will help you rebuild your relationship with this person. Make sure you include God in your plans.

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What important principles have you learned from these lessons on forgiveness?

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