



THE HEALING POWER OF FORGIVENESS

"Naomi had come to Dr. William Wilson for more than a year. Abused as a child, she struggled with uncontrollable anger, despite having reached middle age. . . .

"One day Dr. Wilson listened to Naomi talk once again about all the people she was mad at. He felt helpless. . . . But then it occurred to him—if this woman could somehow find it in her heart to forgive those who had wronged her, she just might find healing. He realized that the power to forgive came exclusively from God. Naomi needed God! . . .

"Dr. Wilson talked to Naomi about how her own resentment and bitterness were imprisoning her. Naomi started to weep. Dr. Wilson asked about her religious convictions. Naomi was hungry to know Christ. She just didn't know how to accept Him.

"Dr. Wilson explained how she could receive the forgiveness that Jesus offered from the cross.

"Accepting Jesus' forgiveness, Naomi began to change. Now she and Dr. Wilson were able to work on forgiveness as a cure for her chronic anger. . . . Naomi had to confront painful things in her past, and she had to consciously forgive.

"But now . . . she had the forgiveness that Christ had given her. In time, Naomi was freed from the anger that had plagued her emotional life. She began to enjoy healthy relationships with coworkers and family members for the first time in decades. . . .

"When Jesus hung upon the cross, unjustly treated and cruelly crucified, He prayed, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34, NKJV).

"Forgiveness opens the door of the mind to receive God's love for those who unjustly treat us. Forgiveness is not an emotion; it is a choice. Is there someone who has wronged you, who has hurt you deeply? Are you harboring resentment toward another person? Now is the time to choose to forgive. The anger and resentment and bitterness will destroy you. If Jesus could forgive those who unjustly crucified Him, you can forgive those who have unjustly wounded you. Right now, will you ask the Holy Spirit to give you the spirit of forgiveness for anyone who has wronged you?"—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 43, 44.

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Luke 6:27, 28, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 10, The Experience of Salvation:** "Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 74, 75

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Proverbs 20:22.
- » The following scenario comes from summer camp: In the cafeteria Phil made a comment about Samantha that humiliated her in front of everyone. Many of the boys and girls laughed out loud while those who were closest to Samantha were mortified. What made it worse was that Phil seemed to be completely unaware that he had humiliated her. He continued through the day as though nothing were wrong. She wanted to do the same to him at an opportune time. Her counselor noticed and encouraged her to have a talk with Phil. What are some of Samantha's options? What will bring her the most satisfaction? What would help Phil change how he treats others? What would you advise Samantha to do?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

- » Read Titus 3:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20; John 16:8.
- » Jesus died to save us from sin and our sinful nature. Through Him we are made clean and whole. When we accept God's grace and forgiveness, it is our responsibility as God's representatives to share His grace and forgiveness with others. We are to show His love for the unlovely by loving them. It is not for us to judge, condemn, or retaliate. Judgment belongs to God. In response to God's love and forgiveness, we should help others learn of His love and forgiveness too.
- » What are some steps you can take today to show God's love and forgiveness to someone who has hurt you?
- » How does God want us to react to the situations listed below? Read God's advice and then write how we should respond in each situation.

Situation	God's Advice	Our Reaction
Your "enemy" is hungry	Proverbs 25:21, 22	
Your "enemy" is thirsty	Proverbs 25:21, 22	
Someone hurts you	Proverbs 20:22	
Your "enemy" destroys your reputation	Proverbs 24:29	
Your "enemy" is always after you	Matthew 5:44	
Someone is bullying you	Romans 12:14	
You are angry and want revenge	Romans 12:19	



Tuesday
REFLECTING

- » Read 1 Peter 3:8.
- » Let's be honest. While it is easy to say the words "I don't care what others think of me," it simply isn't true. When others mistreat us or put us down we get hurt or angry. Jesus uses the illustrations of someone striking us on the face or stealing what belongs to us or even using their authority to belittle us. And yet His goal is for us to experience the freedom of loving others unconditionally, even those who are hateful. He promises He will give us the power to do that through His grace.
- » The nature of human pride is such that when someone mistreats us, we deeply want to hurt them back, at least the same, if not more. God knows that when we hang on to the injustice done to us, it only damages us. He also knows the most potent response is the loving response. Jesus has the secret to our joy. He commands us to "be perfect." His goal is to get us to try another way than the way of this world. How can you try this "other way" with everyone you meet?

Thursday
CONNECTING

- » Read Matthew 5:38-48.
- » Review the memory text.
- » It has been said that what makes Jesus so compelling is that He believes the best about us while knowing the worst about us. Despite the sinful nature we have inherited, Jesus loves us. Through His power, we are capable of loving others unconditionally. God asks you to practice selfless love even toward those who are mean. If someone hates you, you can be certain God loves you. If someone mistreats you, you have the option either to chain yourself to that unfortunate moment or to live generously and not be bound by the anger.
- » To do this, we must ask the Spirit to help us think as God does. God looks at our mistakes and our awful tendencies and sees a precious child who is acting foolishly, but who has the potential to be better. God sees our mean behavior and says, "There is a better way to handle your own pain than hurting others." Are there some people that you need to set free from your anger? Are there some events that you just need to let go of? Pray and ask God to give you the power to do it.

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read Romans 12:14-21 (NIV).
- » Apply the questions that appear in the diagram on the right to one of the stories mentioned in this lesson or in one that you are familiar with that addresses the topic of revenge. See if you can discover these questions at work, or how they might help defuse the situation and bring something good out of the bad.

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Fill in the blanks after looking up the texts in the New International Version (go to Biblegateway.com).
- 1. "Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your _____. Rebuke your _____ frankly so you will not _____ in their _____. Do not seek _____ or bear a _____ against anyone among your _____, but love your neighbor as _____. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:17, 18).
- 2. "Do not say, 'I'll _____ you back for this _____!' Wait for the Lord, and he will _____ you" (Proverbs 20:22).
- 3. "Finally, all of you, be _____, be _____, love one _____, be _____ and humble. Do not _____ evil with _____ or insult with _____. On the contrary, repay evil with _____, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, 'Whoever would love life and see _____ days must keep their _____ from _____ and their _____ from _____ speech. They must turn from evil and do _____; they must seek _____ and _____ it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the _____ and his ears are attentive to their _____, but the face of the Lord is against _____ who do evil'" (1 Peter 3:8-12).
- 4. "Do not say, 'I'll _____ done to me; I'll pay them _____'" (Proverbs 24:29).

Consider the source—some people behave badly because they have been mistreated. Why would this person be treating me this way? Is this about me or them?

Have I done the same thing before to someone else? What has God done for me when I have wronged Him? What will I gain by retaliation? What will I gain by loving unconditionally?

The "Other Way"

Ask the questions around the diagram and see if they help you arrive at a better way to handle being mistreated.

What response will help my offender to become the person God wants them to be? How can my response help them see what God is like?

