

FORGIVENESS

X A Prescription
for Peace

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Dedication

To my son Frank, who helped me learn the value of forgiveness. As we struggled through some very dark days in his life, we both learned the importance of the Biblical teaching on forgiveness.

Forgiveness: A Prescription for Peace

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God's Plan of Salvation

Carefully ponder these Scripture verses, as they explain how you can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

God loves you and wants you to enjoy the abundant life He offers you.

- John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
- John 10:10—Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Man is sinful, and his sin separates him from God.

- Romans 3:23—“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
- Romans 6:23—“For the wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God].”

Jesus Christ's death is the only provision God has made to pay for man's sin.

- Romans 5:8—“But God commendeth [demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
- John 14:6—“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

You must receive Jesus Christ as your Savior before you can personally experience His love for you and the abundant life He has planned for you.

- John 1:12—“But as many as received him, to them gave

he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

You can invite Christ into your life right now by an act of faith.

- Ephesians 2:8, 9—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Are you ready to invite Christ into your life to be your Savior? Use the following prayer as a guide to help you express your desire to God: “Lord God, I know I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe Jesus died for my sins. Right now I receive Him as my Savior. Take control of my life, and replace all the restlessness and anxiety with peace and contentment.”

If you have prayed this prayer, tell your Bible study leader or a friend who has been trying to help you.

Learn to trust God’s Word—not your feelings—when doubts come.

- Romans 10:13—“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
- 1 John 5:11–13—“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Preface

Someone has said our brains are like computers: everything we've heard or said is filed away in our memory banks. If we push the right key, it comes up on the screen of our minds. However, the one thing our minds don't have that computers have is a delete key. Wouldn't it be great if all the hurtful words and actions (our own and those of others) could be wiped out of our minds?

A common expression is, "Just forgive and forget!" Don't you wish it was that easy? Our brains are so strange. We forget the things we should remember, and we remember the things we should forget. We may never be able to forget some of those awful experiences that wounded us so deeply, but we can learn to forgive.

If you have been struggling with forgiveness, this book was written for you. My prayer is that before you complete this study, you will know the freedom of forgiveness and the peace that freedom brings.

Hidden Emotions That Surface as Anger

*“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city:
and their contentions are like the bars of a castle”
(Proverbs 18:19).*

When I started writing these lessons, I began with the primary subject of the book: forgiveness. However, when I finished the lessons, I felt something was missing. One day when I was reading a book on anger, I realized an unforgiving spirit doesn't just spring up overnight. An unforgiving spirit starts with feelings of rejection, hurt, disappointment, betrayal, or some other emotion that surfaces as anger. The anger eventually turns into bitterness. Bitterness, which is harbored hurt, takes root and grows into an unforgiving spirit. Therefore, before we deal with the subject of forgiveness, we need to consider anger and bitterness.

Anger is an emotion that is like a flashing light, warning us that something is stewing and brewing inside of us. This emotion can be constructive, but most of the time it is not. If anger is not handled correctly and if it goes unchecked, it can be destructive.

1. What are some underlying emotions that can surface and be expressed outwardly as anger?
2. Look up “anger” in the dictionary. What definitions relate to you? Why?

The dictionary defines anger as “a hostile feeling of displeasure that may result from injury, mistreatment, opposition.” Notice that anger starts with an emotional feeling and then surfaces as anger.

3. What are some other words we use to mean “angry”?

4. When we feel frustrated on the _____, anger will often surface on the _____.
5. Why do verbal attacks make us feel insecure? How do we usually respond outwardly?

6. When someone attacks you verbally, how can you keep from adding fuel to the fire? Read Proverbs 15:1.

God tells us not to return evil for evil but to do good to those who hurt us (Romans 12:17–21). Could a soft answer be like heaping coals of fire on a person’s head? In his *1200 More Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*, A. Naismith records the following story as told by Charles Haddon Spurgeon about how a dog returned good for evil.

I once lived where my neighbor’s garden was divided from me only by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my plants. So, one evening, while I walked alone, I saw this dog doing mischief and being a long way off, I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick, and came to me with it in his mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet and looked up at me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him?”¹

7. Why does God urge us not to offend others needlessly? Read Proverbs 18:19.

8. Read Proverbs 29:22. How does God describe an angry person?

9. Sometimes pride is the underlying emotion that causes anger. How can openly and honestly admitting we have insecurities or frustrations help us deal with anger? Read Proverbs 13:10 and 16:18.

10. Read Psalm 139. David ended this psalm with righteous anger caused by the underlying emotions of disappointment and hurt. What “offenses” did David recount?
Verse 20

Verse 21

Verses 23 and 24

11. Continual frustration due to unfulfilled plans or the failure of people is an underlying emotion that can eventually erupt in anger. Moses lost his temper and disobeyed God. Read the account in Numbers 20:7–12. What was Moses supposed to do? What did he do?

12. What was there about the Children of Israel that may have led to Moses' frustration and eventual anger? See Numbers 14:2 and 20:2–6.

John C. Maxwell suggests lessons we can learn from Moses about anger and decision-making:

We learn something invaluable about leadership at the expense of Moses in Numbers 20. By this point Moses felt unendurably weary of the complaining, the stagnation, and the lack of progress among the people. He was running on empty. And in his weakened condition he made a decision that cost him his future. Directed by God to speak to a rock, . . . in anger he struck it. . . . This sad incident teaches us at least two lessons. First, never make a major decision during an emotionally low time. Make decisions in the peak times, not the valley times. . . . Second . . . Don't let your mandate come from the grumbling of the crowd. Get your cues from God and the mission He has given you.²

13. Read Matthew 26:69–75. Peter was confused and frustrated. He didn't understand why Jesus had been arrested. How did his frustration evidence itself?

Ask yourself some questions the next time you feel hot under the collar and angry words are welling up inside or about to explode out of your mouth.

14. Am I feeling disappointed and hurt? If so, how can Jeremiah 29:11 help me?
15. Am I frustrated and confused? If so, how can Job 23:10 help me?

16. Think of the last time you got angry. What do you think was the underlying emotion churning inside you?
- Hurt
 - Frustration
 - Disappointment
 - Confusion
 - Other
17. What are the most common sources of anger in your life?
- Children
 - Bills
 - Spouse
 - Neighbors
 - Economic issues
 - Other
18. Why is it important to realize that anger is a symptom of something going on inside us?



From My Heart

I had to do a lot of reading on anger and emotions to put this lesson together. I never fully understood that anger is an outward expression of some inward turmoil. I have learned that before anger surfaces, another emotion has already been working inside us. So when we feel angry, we need to ask ourselves, “Why am I feeling like this?” If we understand what’s going on inside, we may be able to avoid an angry response.

I ask myself these questions when I feel inward turmoil:

- Is this righteous or selfish anger?
- Is this a biggie—does it need to be addressed?
- If I say what I feel, will it be worth the fallout that may result?

Do you ever talk to yourself? It might be worth it if you talk to yourself before you talk to someone else—especially if you are churning inside!

From Your Heart



What is the most valuable thing you learned about anger from this lesson? How can what you learned help you the next time angry words are about to erupt from your mouth?

Notes

1. Charles Haddon Spurgeon in A. Naismith, *1200 More Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962): 239, quoted in William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 828.
2. John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 178.