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**VCL International**  
**VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING CONFERENCE**

***EXTENDING FORGIVENESS***

**Lesson Transcript by Ted Sellers**

Let's talk about a very, very important subject—the subject of extending forgiveness. As I think about the subject of extending forgiveness, I'm reminded of a story that Paul Harvey told. He told a story about two men who went fishing in central Texas. Bob and George were two good old boys that were retired and just had a lot of free time. They went out fishing 2 or 3 times a week. On one of their trips out as they were fishing, their poles were in the water and they were just relaxing. George did something he really enjoyed doing, he removed his dentures. He could never do that at home, but he could do it out on the boat. It just felt so good. He put them on the back seat of the boat and went on fishing. After a little while Bob noticed these dentures on the seat of the boat and decided to play a practical joke. So he just picked them up and put them in his pocket. Then he took his dentures out and put them in place of George's just to see what would happen. Well, a little while later George, who had originally put his dentures there, went to retrieve them. He picked them up, put them in his mouth, and tried to adjust them a little bit and took them right back out. He said, "You know, Bob, these things have never fit right and I'm not going to stand it anymore." And he threw them out into the lake. Now there's Bob with George's dentures in his pocket. What's he going to do? He takes those dentures out and turns around and says, "You know, George, these things have never really fit me that well either." And he threw his dentures out into the lake. Hundreds of dollars worth of dentures settled to the bottom of the lake. If these two guys had ever told what they did that day, they would need to extend forgiveness to each other.

I don't know if they ever told.

This is a very, very important subject. In fact, just before we began teaching, one of the lady counselors here said this is such an important subject she uses this every week when she counsels with someone, because it is something that comes up again and again. Many times as I begin counseling, I ask people to make 2 lists—on one, list of all the people who have hurt you and on the other list, all the people that you have hurt. Which list do you think is longer? It's the list of people that have hurt you.

This lesson deals with that list. **What do I do with the people who have hurt me?** Forgiveness is very important in God's work. Think about Joseph in the Old Testament. Joseph was a guy who needed to extend forgiveness. His brothers threw him in a dry well. I don't know if that was good or bad. I don't know if you want water to break your fall or you just want to land on the dirt. But they threw him in a well, took him out of the well, and sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. He went to work at Potiphar's palace and Potiphar's wife falsely accused him. He went to jail, and while he is in jail a couple of people are sent there from the palace. They told Joseph their dreams and he interpreted their dreams correctly. The baker was killed. The other man, the king's cupbearer, was restored to his work. And Joseph said, "When you get back up there and you're working next to the king, don't forget me down here in the pit." The guy said, "Sure, no problem." Remember how long it was that he forgot him? Two years more Joseph sat in prison. One day the king, Pharaoh, had a

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dream. Nobody could interpret it. And the king's cupbearer said "Oh, wait a minute. I remember a guy who does dreams. When we were in prison. You remember the baker, the guy that made that bad strudel that time, remember him? Remember how you got rid of him? You killed him and you put me in prison. This guy is good. His name is Joseph."

So they sent for Joseph. Joseph came in before the king and the king said, "I've got a dream and nobody can interpret it." Remember what Joseph said? He said: "You know what king, I really don't want to hear your problems. I want to tell you about some of my problems. I want to talk about my brothers, 11 of them. These guys are real jerks. You know what they did? Let me tell you what they did." Joseph explains about his brothers. "And you remember that woman over there? I never touched that woman and I went to jail. I didn't lay a hand on her. And then, you, you forgot me for 2 years. No, I'm ticked. I'm not going to do dreams." Is that what he said? No. Joseph, I believe, had learned how to forgive all the way along so that when that big moment came, he was ready and he did do a very important job in interpreting that dream.

This lesson will bring great freedom into your life if it's applied again and again. I've used it many, many times in my life. I've even been able to forgive people and not remember later what it was they did or said to me. It's an amazing thing as you walk through how to extend forgiveness. I've seen it literally set hundreds of people free and it can do the same for you.

## **ACHIEVING ONENESS**

### **(Diagram 200-A)**

Let's turn to your first diagram, 200-A, "Achieving Oneness." This is an octagon. It starts out with the word "attraction." Under the word attraction you can put some pluses on your notebook, because when two people begin

to get to know each other there is an attraction. There is a desire to have that relationship grow because they like what they see in that other person. This could be two people who may end up in marriage, it could be two people who are going to go into business together, or it could be just two people who are going to be college roommates. But, as they spend time together, there's an attraction.

Then there's openness. You can put some more pluses under that word "openness" because they begin to share more and talk more and reveal more as they spend time together. That eventually leads to the big "C."

See that "C" on your diagram. Under that "C" you can write the word "commitment." If they're dating, the commitment is getting married or if they're going to be roommates the commitment is signing a lease. If they're going into business together, it's the contract. They are committed. With one's expertise in selling and the other's expertise in organizing the office they ought to make a killing and so they go into business.

Now we have "exposure." Right beside the word exposure you need to put a couple of minus signs. These are negatives. There are two kinds of exposure. There's external exposure, what I see in you that I don't like. There's also internal exposure, what I see in me that I don't like. I remember as I was dating Susan, the girl that I eventually married. She found some external things about me that she didn't like. What she didn't like were my clothes. She said, "I wonder, if it would be possible, if I could look in your closet." We had been dating a while so I felt comfortable with her looking in my closet, because I had some neat suits and clothes. I had little red and white check things, I had some polyester pants that were so sharp you could cut bread on the seam of those pants. I thought I had some good clothes. She went in and looked at my clothes and she said, "Oh, this

is sad. Everything stretches and it's all polyester and fake and there's nothing here that's breathing and alive." I didn't know what she was talking about. This isn't a zoo, it's a closet. She was talking about cotton and wool and all these things and she said, "I hate your clothes. I like you, but I can't stand how you dress." That's external exposure. She was able to throw those things away and now when I walk, I breathe and move because I have all these natural things that she enjoys.

There's also internal exposure. I find out things about myself that I don't like. Obviously, it's your fault because I never acted like that until I met you. I didn't know that I was impatient until I had a child. That is one of the best ways to find out how impatient you are. You can find that out in your relationship.

Business partners get together and they start to have conflicts because they're finding out: yes, he's organized, but he's also meticulous and picky and perfectionistic. I didn't like that part. He's coming in every day and redoing my office and straightening out my desk. Everything is all moved around. I don't like that. I'm getting upset. I never used to be this upset. It's his problem. We need to dissolve this relationship. These external and internal exposures cause conflict.

That's the next word, "conflict." Three words you'll want to write next to the word "conflict"—conflicts are normal, conflicts are neutral, and conflicts are natural. They will happen. You can't put two people together without having conflict. The problem is not that there is a conflict. Many people try to prevent the conflict: "Peace at any price; don't rock the boat; let's make sure we're friends, we're not going to have any disagreements because we're Christians and we won't argue; there won't be conflicts, the Lord will protect us from that." No, conflicts will happen.

In the Bible there were many godly, spiritual men who had conflicts. Paul and Peter had a conflict. The problem is not the conflict. It's what I do with it and how I handle it, because the conflict often produces separation. We have a whole list here of separations that occur all the way down to some kind of a permanent separation or even a divorce. Now the separation in itself is not necessarily a bad thing. God permits separation to get our attention, to wake us up to realize something is wrong in this relationship. Something needs to be dealt with.

Many times when people come for counseling and they say: "I've just realized I've got a real problem with this other person. Let's talk about how we can fix this other person, because I know this person is the problem, I'm not. This person is a problem. Maybe, you can help me cope with this person." The separation is to get a person's attention to work on himself or herself, not to try to fix the other person, but that's what many people think. If I can fix that person then we're done, we've solved the problem because that person is the problem. Romans 14:12 says, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." When I talk to God he isn't going to say, "Let me talk to you about your wife." He's going to say, "I want to talk to you about you."

That moves us to repentance. When we begin to see what we've done and we want to be reconciled, there needs to be repentance. First, repentance toward God and then, second, repentance toward the people that have been offended. When there is repentance there can be reconciliation.

There are three parts to reconciliation. Somebody has to seek forgiveness. Then the person who has been offended will extend forgiveness and they can rebuild the relationship. We're going to deal with the second part of that today, extending forgiveness. Seeking forgiveness and rebuilding the relationship are covered in the

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“Seeking Forgiveness.” Once reconciliation happens, then there is oneness and maturing love. Then you can have more attraction and more openness and even more exposure. We go around and around that circle. The more times you go around the deeper that relationship becomes. That’s a good thing. However, many people stop at the conflict phase or they stop at the separation phase. Here’s what happens if you do.

### **PERSONAL CONFLICT WITHOUT FORGIVENESS (Diagram 200-B)**

The next diagram, 200-B, is “Personal Conflict Without Forgiveness.” Here’s a question, “What do most people do when there is a conflict?” Nothing. They don’t do anything. They just think it will get better. Time heals all wounds. That’s a verse out of some book in the Old Testament. Right? No, it’s not even in the Bible. Notice the harmony arrow coming. Then observe the conflict explosion. Then there is hurt, silence, anger, and resentment and there’s a big emotional distance between these two people. The vertical lines indicate time passing. Numbers 1 through 8 could be days, weeks, or months. There are four statements there and in each one of them I want you to circle the same word. It’s the word “b-u-t, but.” There’s a gradual fading of resentment, **but** not completely, gradual forgetting of the offense, **but** never totally. We’re getting along better, **but** oneness no longer exists. There’s eventual disregarding of the breach, **but** it’s never fully healed. There needs to be reconciliation. There needs to be the seeking and extending of forgiveness.

### **CONTINUAL CONFLICT WITHOUT FORGIVENESS (Diagram 200-C)**

If you go on to the next diagram, 200-C “Continual Conflict Without Forgiveness,” you’ll see what happens if this pattern continues. You see the explosions are getting bigger and a person says: “Well I’m pretending, this is okay I think. I’m tolerating it. I’m resigned—I guess that’s

the way it is. I give up; it is no use.” Many times as I counsel married people and I show them this diagram I say, “Where would you say your relationship is right now?” I have a lot of little pen marks on that letter “d.”

“It’s no use. We’re right here. We’re ready to give up this whole thing.” I was just thinking about it today that this diagram is a lot like flossing your teeth. Why do you floss your teeth? You floss your teeth so that tartar doesn’t build up on your teeth, because when you go to your dentist he says, “Oh my goodness, look at all this. We’re going to have to really grind and scrape to get rid of this.” Then you think, “Why didn’t I floss for the last six months.” So they have to clean it all off. You want to stop the buildup. By extending forgiveness as soon as you are offended, you remove that potential buildup so it doesn’t get worse. So a new offense isn’t built on the last one and pretty soon you just blow up, because there’s too much buildup. How do you remove the buildup? By extending forgiveness all the way along—even if it is not requested.

### **EXTENDING FORGIVENESS (Diagram 200-D)**

Let’s look at “Extending Forgiveness,” 200-D, on the next page. Here’s a definition: Extending forgiveness is taking the time to consider how a person has hurt me. This would include listing the act, my hurt, the ramifications, and my sinful reactions. Then I depend on the indwelling forgiver, Jesus, as I extend grace to the offender just as Jesus extended grace to me. That’s the important thing to remember. There are times when people hurt you so severely that you do not want to forgive them. Even as you think about it, you say they don’t even deserve to be forgiven. That may be true. I don’t know about you, but I don’t think I deserved to be forgiven by the Lord. Did you? What did we do to get forgiveness from God? What did we do to deserve it?

I remember ministering to a guy one day who was an ex-con. He'd been in jail for twenty-some years, and he said, "the thing that really impresses me about God is that He is not fair." I said, "What?" He said, "If God were fair, I'd be in hell today." I'd never thought about it like that. Here is a guy who has been punished by society by being put in jail, and when he thought about God, he said, "Of all the things I've done, if God were really fair, He'd toast me. This whole thing of forgiveness isn't fair. God shouldn't have forgiven me, but He did." And you think: "It isn't fair that I have to forgive this person, because it won't even change the person or it won't change the past." No it won't, but aren't you glad that God wasn't fair to us, that He forgave us and extended grace? What is grace? Giving me what I don't deserve. That's grace.

Next, "What Forgiving Is Not." This is really important, especially, as I try to walk through forgiveness with people who need to forgive their parents. Well, Mom and Dad, did the best they could. My dad never showed love to me. I don't ever remember him ever saying, "I love you," or hugging me. He never did that. I can remember old Grandpa Sellers. He was the same way. Old Grandpa Sellers died in Cincinnati, Ohio, on skid row. He was a drunk. He was a tough old bird. He never told my dad he loved him, so why would my dad tell me that he loved me. That's not forgiving, that's excusing. Another thing is tolerating or just overlooking or just letting time pass or saying: "Well, that's just the way he is. He's just a cranky old person." That's not forgiving.

So why is it important that I do forgive? Because if I don't exercise forgiveness there are several things that can happen.

I can continue to hold this person guilty and actually treasure up what they have done. I've got a book at my house called *Love, Marriage, and Trading Stamps*. I've never read it and

probably never will, but I just love the title. Do you get the picture? Every time there's an offense I put a little trading stamp in it. I fill a page up, go to the next page, fill the whole book up and save it. When an event happens that reminds me of the offenses in the book, I gather them up and cash them in. The person may say, "What did I do to get all that wrath?"

"What you did was that, that, that, that, and that and I haven't forgotten one of them."

Without forgiveness, I can foster resentment and I can become bitter. Hebrews 12:15 talks about a root of bitterness. Don't let a root of bitterness grow in you. Many will be defiled. Who can be defiled? Anybody who is around you who will listen to you. Have you ever talked to any bitter older people? They tell you about all the people who did them wrong and they'll remember all the events: "Yeah, I remember 37 years ago when that man borrowed my lawn mower and he never brought it back, but when he did bring it back it was broken. I'll never forget that." I don't want to be a bitter old man, but if I don't forgive that's what can happen.

I can secretly await the "joy" of seeing this person punished by God. What is that? That is a form of godship. One of the areas of godship is revenge and vengeance. "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord. "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, / And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; / Lest the Lord see it and be displeased, / And He turn away His anger from him" (Proverbs 24:17-18).

"But he deserves something."

"Well, let God do the something. Don't you try to mete out the punishment, let God do it. He's got a lot more resources. He's got a lot more power. God can really affect someone's life. We're pretty puny in our attempts to try to do it, so let God do it. And then in Romans 12:19 in the Phillips,

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“Never take vengeance into your own hands. Stand back and let God punish, if He will.”

Not forgiving may cause problems with other people who remind you of someone you haven’t forgiven. I remember ministering to a man who had an awful time with his boss. His boss was a lady. He would come in and say, “I’ve got to forgive my boss. Here is what she did.” So we talked about what she did. We walked through this very process that I am showing you today. And the next week he came in and said, “Well, we’ve got to do it again.” I said, “Man, this is really getting to be repetitious.” He said, “Yeah.” All of a sudden it dawned on him and he said, “Do you know why?” I said, “Why?” He said, “We’re forgiving the wrong woman.” I said, “Well, she’s the one offending you.” He said, “I know, but it’s my mother. She’s the one I haven’t forgiven. She’s the one who broke promises to me when I was a little boy about 5 years old. We were having financial problems and she said, ‘we’re going to have to do something for just a weekend. I’m going to take you to this place and we’ll be back Monday to get you.’” It was an orphanage. He stayed there for 14 years. He had never forgiven his mother for that, and now because of his mom, he resented any woman in authority who tries to tell him what to do.

What’s the process of extending forgiveness? Whenever I go through this process, I use four, 3 x 5 cards. You can use 4 x 6 or 8½ x 11 depending on the offense, but have four sheets of paper. On the first sheet of paper, I have the person list what the person did or didn’t do that was offensive. You can help the person think through it. Just the facts of the offense.

“But the person meant well.”

“I know, but did they do that, did it hurt you?”

“Yes.”

“Okay. Write it down.”

On the second sheet, the person lists all of the feelings—all of the hurt. I can put some down here for you: embarrassed, belittled, devastated, defiled, hustled, cheated. We have even compiled a list of many “feeling” words that we can use to help people identify with their feelings.

The third list—ramifications. When we get to the ramifications phase, we look at all seven areas of life because, the way I see it, the offense is like a rock. The rock hits the water and that’s what the person did. But the ramifications are all the ripples that have gone out from that offense. The offense may have happened 10 years ago, but I’m still living with some of the ramifications. Think about a person going through a divorce, for example. The divorce may be the offense, but what are the ramifications? What are those ramifications with childcare? There are financial problems. There may even be physical problems because of having to work two jobs. There are social problems. The people in my church don’t want anything to do with me now because I’ve been divorced. There are spiritual problems because I’m a little bit ticked with God. Why did God let this happen? You have to look at all those ramifications. Many times when someone forgives another person, the person doesn’t consider the ramifications of that offense and that’s why it doesn’t feel finished.

The last list is the person’s sinful reactions regarding this offense. What the other person did was wrong, but did you do anything wrong? Most people are willing to admit, “Yeah, not outwardly, maybe just inwardly.”

“What were they?”

“Well there was bitterness and anger and hate and resentment.”

There can also be gossip and slander or trying to get even—revenge. Those are all sinful reactions.

Now we go to Diagram E-2 and use the keys of forgiveness. We'll talk about that when we get to Diagram E-2. What do you do after you get done with these lists and you walk through extending forgiveness? You tear up all those lists. I have a great big pickle jar in my office that's about three-quarters full of torn up pieces of paper from people who have walked through extending forgiveness to others. **Don't tell the person that they are forgiven.** That could actually make things a little more difficult. **This is just between you and the Lord.** So after you do this lesson, you may forgive your mom or your dad and then call them up tomorrow and say, "Hi, Mom, Dad, you know what, I just heard a neat teaching about extending forgiveness."

"Oh, really, that's nice."

"And so I forgave you."

"For what? What do you mean you forgave me? You were the one who was ungrateful. I tried the best I could to raise you and you're forgiving me?"

Don't do that. Don't go to work Monday morning and say to your boss "Hey, I went to a neat conference over the weekend. Learned how to forgive people and you were right on top of the list. I feel a lot better now that I have forgiven you." Don't do that. However, if someone that you have forgiven comes to you a week or two after you've forgiven them and they say, "The Holy Spirit has been convicting me. I haven't been treating you right. I remember what I said to you or what I did to you. Would you please forgive me?" You don't say, "Oh, I'm a lot more spiritual than you are. I did that about 2 weeks ago. I'm glad that you're seeing that offense and that you're able to catch up to where I am." Don't do that either. It's trying to be hyperspiritual. Just say, "Sure, I'd be glad to forgive you. Thank you very much."

Now, if this offense is of a persistent nature and disrupts Christian harmony, then you may need to confront the person, but you have to have already exercised forgiveness toward that person. The objective is not to punish them or get even or anything like that, it's to purify the church and win or restore the offender. You can check Matthew 18 and Proverbs 25:9 for a pattern of doing that and the attitude is found in Galatians 6:1-2. I remember one man who found his wife reading romance novels and he decided that was wrong and he told her to quit. She said, "I don't want to. I don't get much romance with you so I find it in these books." He decided to bring that before the church. He said, "What if I this Sunday tell our whole Sunday school class what you've been doing?" That's when she hit him. She smacked him right in the mouth. She said, "You'd better not tell the whole Sunday school class." So there are times when you don't want to tell everyone, especially when it's just regarding your spouse. He needed to forgive her and tell no one else.

Let's look at the process. We have some pictures that will illustrate what we've just been looking at. The reason we're doing this is because the process of extending forgiveness has been too simple, too quick, too easy. Someone offends you, the person comes to you and says, "You know what I did yesterday, what I said to you."

"Yeah, that really hurt."

"Well, I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

And you say, "Okay." Pretty simple. What we are trying to do is stretch out and make this a little longer and a little more detailed so that we really think through what's happening when we extend forgiveness to someone.

### ***I AM THE OFFENDED (Diagram 200-E)***

Go to Diagram 200-E, "I Am the Offended." Here we have a little court scene. You are the

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offended person. In your mind when you think about the fact that you've been offended, you see yourself as the judge. So now you put on the judge's robe. You sit down and pick up the gavel. The offender is standing there, he's got his hands behind his back, handcuffed. You bring down the gavel and say, "You're guilty, buddy, and I'm going to sentence you to 2 weeks of silence or revenge of some kind or some other kind of punishment."

The only problem is we are not equipped to do that. I love what James 4:12 says. It says, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" Who do you think you are, God? God can do it. Psalm 9:8 says, "He will judge the world in righteousness." He is the judge. Shall not the judge of all the earth be right? The reason He can be the judge is that He is sinless. You and I are not. You and I don't have the credentials to be a judge. We don't have the spiritual credentials that God does. So, your attempt to lay guilt on this person by setting a standard is reacting after the flesh. For example: "This person should not have treated me that way"—whatever it was. I've written it generically so that it would fit any situation.

### **THE RESULT OF MY FLESHLY REACTIONS (Diagram 200-E1)**

The only problem is that the judge goes to jail, not the offender, not the prisoner. He's out running around, isn't that true? He's out running around and you're the one feeling all beaten up and hurt. You're in jail. Look at the bars of that jail—slander, bitterness, quarreling, silence, ramifications. There are all the ramifications we've talked about. Some of those ramifications can also be unreasonable thinking or "stinking thinking." For example, a ramification could be because that man hurt me, then I think all men will hurt me and I will never trust another man. Another ramification could be because of what that person did, and God

permitted it, I'm not sure I can even trust God. That's stinking thinking or "rotten reasoning."

You can silently deal with this or you can deal with it in a noisy manner. You can have abusive speech, even swearing. The result is the same. If I go to bed angry, I can give the Devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26–27 says, "BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Do not give the Devil an opportunity. That word "opportunity" has a footnote in my Bible that says "a place." The NIV translates it "a foothold." The Greek word is *topos*. It means a geographical location. In other words, as I allow the enemy to affect me by not extending forgiveness, he begins to torment me. Have you ever met people who are really tormented, they're angry? It could be because people have offended them and they have not extended forgiveness. Going to bed angry gives the Devil a foothold to torment me, a child of God, and I'm actually held prisoner by reacting after the flesh. So this control of the flesh, torment by the Devil, can only be stopped by extending forgiveness. Now the offender should ask you to forgive them, but, as my mother used to say, don't hold your breath, they may never do it. But you can initiate forgiveness. Notice, you've got the keys in your hand, the keys to freedom. There are 7, perfect number.

The interesting thing about this, this jail is a little like the one that used to be on the Andy Griffith Show. Do you remember Otis, the town drunk? Old Otis would come in all lathered up with some kind of liquor and he'd say, "Andy, I have to spend the night in jail." And Andy would say, "That's all right, Otis. The keys are right there." So Otis would pick the keys up and unlock the jail, put himself in, then hang the keys up outside and then when he'd sobered up in the morning, he'd reach out and get the keys and let himself out. Well, that's the exciting thing about this jail. You can let

yourself out, you do not have to stay there. Oswald Chambers, said this, “If there is the tiniest grudge in your mind against anyone, from that second your spiritual penetration into the knowledge of God stops.” It’s very unwise to go around holding grudges. I like what he says, “from that second your spiritual penetration into the knowledge of God stops.” Do you want to know more about the Lord, do you want to grow in the Christian life, do you want to live a victorious Christian life? Here are the keys, get out of jail, forgive that person, don’t let that grudge stymie your spiritual growth.

## **I CHOOSE TO EXTEND**

### **FORGIVENESS (Diagram 200-E2)**

Diagram 200-E2, “I Choose to Extend Forgiveness.” See the little guy, he’s out of jail, he’s holding his keys, and the door is open, he’s free! I can achieve freedom by extending forgiveness and using these keys. I am set free from the prison and the torment. There are seven keys. Let’s just go through these quickly. The way I use this in ministering to someone is that the person has four lists we already made. I tell them to use their lists and pray with their eyes open, that’s okay. For some people, that’s a little scary. It is amazing how it works.

Last Sunday I did this in an adult Sunday school class of about 15 people. I asked for a volunteer. “Who would like to extend forgiveness to someone?” It was really interesting because the man said “I would.” So I passed the 3 x 5 cards over to him and said, “All right, what was it that your wife did or didn’t do starting with list one? What was the act?” He said, “Oh no, it’s not what she has done, it’s what I have done.” I said, “Oh, it’s what you have done. Hand the list to your wife.” So she took the cards and I said, “What did he do?” We went through extending forgiveness. It was really neat to see this played out.

Afterward, one of the men said, “Wow, that was exciting. That was like spiritual surgery. I felt

like I had my mask on. There was blood all over the place. There was bad stuff that was taken out. There was healing brought right before our eyes. There was death and then there was life through extending forgiveness.” And the man got to see it happen. He sat there and watched it. That’s exciting. You can do this even with the other person in the room. I still remember the first time I did that with two people. The wife was extending forgiveness to her husband and he was sitting there and I was pretty much oblivious to him, I was just watching her and working with her and she prayed through all this. When she got done, he took a big sigh and looked at me and said, “Thank you.” I forgot he was there. I said, “What do you mean, thank you?” He said, “This is the first time in my life that I’ve ever felt genuinely forgiven. I saw it happen right before my eyes.”

Key #1—I admit to God how I felt regarding this offense. That’s list number 2, the list of feelings. We start there because that’s where anybody can start. People know what they felt. Psalm 62:8 says, “. . . Pour out your heart before Him. . .”

Key #2—Admit to God that you’ve been holding this person guilty for the act, that’s list 1, the hurt, list 2, and ramifications, that’s list 3. You just read down through the list. God, I’m holding this person guilty for what he or she did. This person did this and this and I felt this and this and I’m holding him guilty for all these ramifications.

Key #3—I now extend my forgiveness to the person for lists 1, 2, and 3. In Ephesians 4:32 it says, “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Whenever Paul uses the word forgiveness, he uses the same Greek word. It’s made up of two words. The first word is *charis*, that’s the Greek word for grace. My pastor’s daughter is named Charisa. Being a theologian he wanted

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to name her something theological. He could have called her Grace, but he called her Charisa, a very beautiful name. So that's the first part. It's *charis omai*. *Omai* means to extend or to give. So what is forgiveness? It's giving grace, extending grace to another person. Isn't that how you and I became a child of God? That's what it says, forgive each other just as God in Christ also has given grace to you.

Where is Jesus if I am a child of God? Where is he? He's living in me. He's the forgiver in me who said, "Father forgive them." That same One is living in me, giving me the ability to do what I need to do in extending forgiveness to whomever it is that has hurt me. So, I extend forgiveness. This is giving grace. I like what Charles Hodge had to say about forgiveness. He said, "God in Christ has freely forgiven you. This is the motive which should constrain us to forgive others. God's forgiveness toward us is free. It precedes even our repentance as the cause of it. He forgave us far more than we can ever be called upon to forgive others."

Key #4—I now put the offender into God's hands and let go. I will allow God to work in this person's life and in His time. First Peter 5:7 says, "casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you."

"And so, Lord, I put this person in your hands. I let go of this person."

Sometimes this is hard for me, because I've got some words of advice I'd like to give to the Lord: "Here's a couple of things I'd like you to do as I forgive this person, Lord. They need a real lesson on sensitivity, okay, and they could do with some manners." But you don't have to do that. Just take your hands off and let God do the adjusting.

Key #5—I now name and confess, that means I agree with God, that I had some sinful reactions and attitudes (that's list 4) including holding this person guilty. So you just admit that to the

Lord, that's what I have been doing.

Key #6—I now choose to live in the new creation that I am. That means I accept that God has forgiven me for those sinful reactions and I lay aside my fleshly reactions.

Key #7—I tell God I am willing to be reconciled to the offender and allow God to love the offender through me. When we finish going through this, I always ask the same question. "Well, is this person guilty now?" The person thinks for a moment and says, "Well, no."

"Was this person guilty?"

"Yeah."

"Is this person guilty now?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I forgave that person."

I remember one man who forgave his father. His father had really hurt him as a young boy. He would grab him off of his bunk and as he was falling, he would punch him in the chest. Other times he would just pick him up. He can remember being up in the air looking down at this red-faced man who was swearing at him. He became an angry young man, and as he went through this list forgiving his father, he hit the table really hard. I didn't know if he was mad at me or if he was going to attack me, because he had been known to do things like that. But he said, "This is ordained of God. This is fantastic."

"That's good. I'm glad you like it."

He went on to teach it in his church. It was exciting. Look what happens if we can live this way—personal conflict with forgiveness.

## **PERSONAL CONFLICT WITH TRUE FORGIVENESS (Diagram 200-F)**

Notice on “Personal Conflict With True Forgiveness,” little explosions of conflict are getting smaller. There’s a shorter time in between when I extend forgiveness and there’s a longer harmony line. That’s what we do, we clean off the plaque. We deal with it right away by extending forgiveness.

Here are some tests of forgiveness. Are you thanking the Lord for what’s happening, even thanking Him during the pain? Because Romans 8:28 says “. . . God causes all things to work together for His good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Even this hurt. Even this pain that you have gone through. God is still using that for His good. So you can thank Him.

Can you talk about this without getting angry?

Are you willing to accept your part? The way that happens often as you extend forgiveness and you get down to the sinful reaction part, you begin to feel convicted by the Holy Spirit that, yeah, I did do some things here, I probably need to go and seek that person’s forgiveness too. It doesn’t always happen, but many times it can.

Can you revisit the scene or the person without experiencing a negative reaction?

Are you even rewarding with good those that have hurt you?

Some people often say, “Well, I just can’t forget about it. Is that one of the tests of forgiveness?” No, it’s not. If someone had abused you in a very mean or violent way you probably will never forget. I can remember several times when people said things to me that hurt me, then I went to the Lord, walked through this process, and forgave them. I remember the person, but I forget what they said. I can’t remember. The sting and the pain are gone because of extending

forgiveness and that’s fantastic.

## **REVIEW**

Let’s look at the review. “God commands us to forgive others when they hurt us.” This is essential to live with impossible people. Pride will stand in the way of extending forgiveness. Extending forgiveness isn’t a thought or a feeling, it’s a definite action. If I refuse to forgive someone who hurts me, I can end up in the jail of my own fleshly reactions and be tormented by the enemy. It does take time to do this because I need to write out the offense, my hurt, the ramifications, and my sinful reactions. Then I need to use the seven keys of forgiveness.

It takes time to walk through putting that all together. Who has the Lord brought to your mind as we’ve gone through this? Is there someone that you’ve been thinking about that you need to forgive? I would challenge you to consider that.

As you forgive, there’s another thought that comes up. That is what about forgiving yourself. Well, you say I can forgive that person, but I’ll never forgive myself. Do you ever hear people say that? They say I need help in knowing how to forgive myself or sometimes they say I can forgive that person, but I don’t think I’ll ever be able to forgive God because He let that happen. There are even people going around helping people forgive God. I have a problem with that because that assumes that God did something wrong. I don’t believe that God does anything wrong. What do we do when we think of those two things, forgiving God and forgiving ourselves. In the lesson in the VCL Conference on godship we talk about setting standards. If I have a standard for God and He doesn’t do things the way I want Him to, then I judge Him and I can reject Him.

I remember one lady telling me, “My only problem I have with God is the fact that He let my husband die of leukemia and I don’t think

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I'll ever be able to forgive Him for that." Well, was it an issue of trying to forgive Him or just recognizing that she had a standard? And she did and she saw it and she was able to say, "God, would you please forgive me? I admit right now to you I've had a standard. The standard was 'You don't take my husband's life. I need him. We have children to raise.'" But God did. She didn't need to forgive God, she needed to admit the standard and drop it.

What about forgiving ourself? Do you have standards for yourself? Maybe even today you were upset because you didn't measure up to your own standard. There's not a verse in the Bible that has anything to do with the standards you need to measure up. But you didn't measure up to your standard. Even an issue of being offended or hurt or used by someone. How can

I be so stupid to let that happen? How can I be so dumb as to buy that from that bad used car salesman or whatever it is? How did that happen? I should have known better. What is that? It's a standard. I should have known better. What's the matter with me? So what do I need to do? Drop the standard. Am I God to go around setting standards? Who am I to judge me and condemn me? I'm not the judge, remember? You don't have the spiritual qualifications to be a judge, so stop judging yourself. Do you have to forgive yourself? No, drop the standard. Admit the godship.

Let's pray. "Lord, I pray now that You would direct those that have thought of someone to whom they need to extend forgiveness. I pray they would do it today using the seven keys of freedom. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."