

Chapter Two

Forgiveness

Jesus says, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you.” A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Luke 6:37-38

All protons, neutrons, and electrons are made up of tiny vibrating strings of energy according to the “string theory” of physics. Information from your toe travels through your nervous system to tell your brain you just stubbed it on something in fractions of a second; actually at the rate of 120 miles per second. Wow. That is fast. But more important still; it is real.

Equally real are thoughts in your brain. Thoughts, while current study remains to reveal much to us, are measurable. So, if you spend some time remembering the smell of a rose that you encountered on a summer day during the first Bush administration, energy is consumed to do this, just like a computer uses some of its resources to put a picture of a rose on a computer screen.

Also, continuing the computer metaphor, when you turn off your computer, it still remembers things which require the consumption of energy. Some of these things include the date and time. If you are holding onto a memory, whether you are thinking about it or not, it is consuming some energy. (Of course, holding a memory without thinking about it pulls us into the subconscious and that will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.)

Advertisers have known for years that a negative image in the mind of a consumer requires ten positive images to correct the one negative image. If negative thoughts require this much effort, logic dictates that we should diminish our negative thoughts. Advertisers have also known that it does not require much effort on their part to put that image in your mind. Subliminal advertising (which is illegal) is the skillful art of putting an image in a video that only occupies a single frame or maybe two within the framework that makes up a moving picture. Your conscious mind never notices the image, but a “craving” will take place because the image was observed subconsciously. Our brains are very powerful consumers of energy!

The entire universe is made of the same thing. If you are busy being burnt by the sun on a hot summer day, both the sun that burns you and the skin being burned are made up molecules which are made up of protons, neutrons, and electrons which are made up of identical vibrating strings. The air around you is made of the stuff. The hair on your head, the toes in your shoes, your entire body and everything around you, are all made of this stuff. Wallace Wattles wrote in

1910, “the stuff which all things are made is a substance which thinks.” (17) These vibrating strings have a purpose, and mankind has known about that purpose for a long time.

There is a story which begins with a man who finds himself in a conversation with someone who represents that they are an angel, sent by God. As proof, the man asks the angel to ask God what was the last sin he had confessed. The messenger returned and when prodded for his answer replied to the man that God said, “I forgot.”

This story illustrates for us a need to forgive, not only for the sake of the sinner; that part is obvious to all, but because of the ease of burden it is for us to forgive when someone trespasses against us. As Lawana Blackwell says in *The Dowry of Miss Lydia Clark*, “Forgiveness is almost a selfish act because of its immense benefits to the one who forgives.” (unkn) In the Bible we read:

Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (MT 6:11-13)

Holding onto the negative energy necessary in withholding forgiveness not only increases your workload, it sends a message through the vibrating strings telling the universe that you would like more of the same! It will attract to you that which you are thinking! Of course, this idea is not new in *The Rags To Riches Project*. This thought has been widely understood as long as humans have been keeping a record of their thoughts in any written form. Allow a brief chronological summary:

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Aesop, *The Lion and the Mouse* Greek slave & fable author (620 BC - 560 BC)

Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves. (Confucius, 479-551 BC)

If you would cure anger, do not feed it. Say to yourself: 'I used to be angry every day; then every other day; now only every third or fourth day.' When you reach thirty days offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods. Epictetus (55 AD - 135 AD)

Phacus, when he had got Alcaeus into his power, released him, saying, “Forgiveness is better than revenge.” Diogenes Laertius (early 200’s AD)

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,. St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

I as free forgive you

As I would be forgiven: I forgive all. (Henry the Eighth)

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none? (Merchant of Venice)

Pray you now, forget and forgive. "King Lear" William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)

Anger makes dull men witty, but it keeps them poor. Elizabeth I (1533 - 1603)

Doing an injury puts you below your enemy; revenging one makes you but even with him; forgiving it sets you above him. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Abraham Lincoln March 4, 1865

There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness. Josh Billings (1818 - 1885)

Always forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much. Oscar Wilde 1854-1900

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948)

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act: it is a permanent attitude." Martin Luther King Jr.

"True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to an evil power...it is rather a courageous confrontation with evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Life is an adventure in forgiveness. Norman Cousins (1915 - 1990)

Never get angry. Never make a threat. Reason with people. (45)

Holding on to anger, resentment and hurt only gives you tense muscles, a headache and a sore jaw from clenching your teeth. Forgiveness gives you back the laughter and the lightness in your life. Joan Lunden, in Healthy Living Magazine (contemporary)

On May 13, 1981, on a very crowded street in Rome, Italy, a gun was fired. The bullet left the gun and entered into Pope John-Paul II. Within two months, the person firing the gun was caught, charged and sentenced to life in prison; a sentence he began in July, 1981. Two years later, having fully recovered from his nearly fatal gunshot wounds, the Pontiff entered the prison for a private meeting with the trigger man.

Pope John-Paul II asked people to "pray for my brother (Ağca), whom I have sincerely forgiven."

But he is a pope, you may suggest. The author states in return, he is first a man. Granted, being the pope does create a certain "aura" that puts you above other men; but the pope is still first a man. If the pope did not carry throughout his life the ability to forgive, his own negative energy would have prevented him from rising to the Papacy in the first place. The pope is an example of a success story. What about other people's stories? Far more people than just the pope hold this ability to forgive.

William was a college educated, middle aged man who earned a living as a school teacher. He was in his late 40's when he decided he would serve his family and community better as an elected official, and he asked his party for their support.

William had grown up in a large family, and he was often considered the "black sheep" of the family; although there was arguably no white sheep in the flock. When he announced his intentions to his family, one of his younger brothers, Philip, remembered all the hurt that William had caused him throughout the years.

Philip thought, "How could he run for office? Who does he think he is? Does he not remember how selfish and hurtful he is?" Philip could only think of the bad things that he had witnessed. Even though Philip had not even had a conversation with his brother longer than 10 minutes in the last ten years, he believed that all those hurtful things from his childhood were all that

mattered. He did not even consider what William's children had thought, even though they had never known the person who Philip remembered as his brother.

Philip could not react positively to his brother's run for public office because to him, William had never grown up. Philip carried a heavy load.

Not only was Philip unable to support William in his campaign, he was unable to have a relationship with his brother that resembled two men who grew up in the same home! All his inability to forgive his brother was manifest in his own life. His was unhappy most days. He was unable to be happy with his wife or his parents. Philip was full of negative energy and was attracting only negative energy in return. William was one of many who were on the list of "unforgiven" in the back of the mind of Philip.

Robert was a retired man living with his wife and seemingly enjoying his life when he began a project with his son, Robert, Jr. The project involved building a new garage because the old one was just too old, and could not be properly repaired. As the project progressed, Senior could see the pride in Junior's work. Junior gave up anything that resembled a life of his own to see the project through. Junior and Senior got to know each other on a brand new level.

Until the day they disagreed on the placement of the windows. Now, dear reader, you may ask, "What difference do windows make?" and it is a justifiable inquiry. Actually, it does not matter. Neither does it matter about anything that is a thing. Only the life of the person matters. But Junior and Senior were so sure that each was right and the other wrong, that they stopped working together. Junior left and would not return.

Five years later, when asked about his father, Junior says, "He's dead to me." Then he would pick up his young son and say, "my relationship with my father will never affect my relationship with my own son." Junior does not understand what it is he carries with him. The negative energy necessary to carry that much lack of forgiveness has a most devastating impact on his young son, not to mention himself. He is teaching his own son that forgiveness is not necessary; that as a man, his own son will not have to forgive him. That should be reason enough all by itself to forgive your father, but it is still secondary to this reason; because it makes sense.

We need to forgive to lighten the load. As previously mentioned, carrying around something that is not forgiven requires the bearer to consume energy; real energy, this is not a metaphor. Let us for the sake of demonstration, concentrate on this aspect. First, let us create a new unit of measure to make it understandable by all. Because we are discussing things here at a micro-molecular level, we need a unit of measure; let us use hangnails.

Next, we can apply that unit of measure to the memory. For example, if a memory of a rose requires 2 tenths of a hangnail to recall, and imagining what it feels like to have your spouse hug you is 4 tenths of a hangnail, and solving an algebraic equation requires a full hangnail, let us imagine and hypothesize about the measurement of a memory that would cause you to say, “He’s dead to me,” when discussing your own father. You would need energy to hold onto feelings of your own inadequacy or self esteem loss, the memory of whatever was done unjustly, and third, the hurtful thoughts that are generated because of the previous two.

Each of these thoughts may require, say 5 tenths of a hangnail. Under this premise, Junior is using 1.5 hangnails to not forgive his father. Instead, that same energy could be used for beautiful memories of hugs, he could solve one and a half algebraic equations, or he could imagine the smelling of eight roses. While solving algebraic equations is not something the author considers a favorite pastime, the notion is still the same: for every ounce of energy spent, either consciously or unconsciously, on not forgiving someone else or yourself, you waste an ounce of energy that could be spent on something far more useful.

As mentioned before, ten positive messages are required to correct a single negative one. Since we are using hangnails as our unit of measure, Robert Jr. needs to be hugged forty times by his spouse to offset the negative impact of the failure to forgive his father. Those of us who are married happily will acknowledge this is about twenty times the number of hugs we receive on a daily basis. Our children do get more, but Robert Jr. has a son who still comes up significantly short of the required forty. Also, these forty hugs, used as our example, are over and above the necessary daily hugs from parent to child already required for happy and healthy existence!

An interesting thing was discovered during the course of researching the material for this chapter. As listed previously, wise people for twenty six hundred years have been boasting on the necessity of forgiveness, but not a single person of renowned wisdom boasts of the necessity of holding on to the pain.

Yvette was nearly fifty years old when she found herself in a very personal conversation with the author. Hers was a bit of a sad story, and the short version is like this: When she was eighteen years old, and looking all as stunning as any beauty queen, she was accosted by an older man in his twenties while she was lying in her bed. She kept this incident to herself for years, even though the accused was her brother-in-law, married to her sister. Nearly twenty years went passed, and she has confronted him, they spoke a little of the matter, then she forgave him and went about her life; all appearances saying to the world that she was happy.

She was, for the most part, happy as a person and with her sister, who remains married to the man. Five years after she had forgiven him, she was reminded of some memory by hearing a similar story from another woman and Yvette remembered again all the things she had forgiven, and thought it a mistake to forgive. She began immediately to hold the grudge against her brother-in-law once again. That is when she happened into a conversation with the author.

She told the author of all the bad things this man had done, and how many people had been hurt by his behavior. The author inquired if this was the same transgression that had been forgiven years before. Yvette's voice went up and she was nearly in tears, and most definitely yelling in the conversation as she reminded the author of how many girls have been hurt. How this behavior could not be forgiven, even if it had already been.

The author waited for the yelling to stop, then quietly asked, "Why do you let this man control you?"

"He doesn't control me!" she screamed in reply.

"Then why are you screaming at me?" the author asked. This calmed Yvette considerably, but did not give her rise to forgive again. We can be certain that forgiveness will come for Yvette, because it is truly what she wants for herself. The tone of her voice used to communicate with someone who had nothing to do with the original pain is truly an insult to both people. Yvette must forgive herself first, because somewhere in the back of her mind, she was led to believe that her own behavior somehow caused the attack, and that her lack of reporting it caused similar attacks on other young women, (thank you very much, television) and she must forgive her attacker, if for no other reason, than to prevent herself from attacking others, as she did the author.

Yvette wants to forgive. If she did not, it would not be such a painful thing to discuss. She would not raise her voice to anyone except in a cry for help or impending danger (FIRE!).

Just as surely as the lack of self esteem is the cause of all conflict between humans in the world, so too, the lack of forgiveness is the source of all violence. If you hit me, I may forgive you and the matter is done, or I may hit you back, which perpetuates the problem. If I am strong enough to forgive you, I am strong enough to not fight back, and therefore be the one who ends the violence. This is a vicious circle, and you, the reader, are now in a position to work to end this circle.

On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by terrorists. The terrorists did a fine job of completely controlling the United States shortly thereafter, and the United States used the terrorists' activities as an excuse to use violence against another country or two. In truth, if the United States had been desirous of proving strength, she would have said, "we are strong enough to forgive you."

This mentality may not be a very popular one, particularly among those who lost a loved one, either on that day or in the wars that followed. But where would we be today if we had chosen forgiveness over war? Well, we would certainly have more than four thousand of the world's bravest military members still alive. And that is enough for me to be motivated to side with forgiveness. The loss of a single life unnecessarily is one too many. What happened to the last "war to end all wars?" Perhaps we could have put pictures of our other beautiful cities on the Internet declaring a "turning [of] the other cheek"! When we go out and search for cowardice people hiding in caves we do more to reduce ourselves to their level than we could possibly do to end the threat of future violence.

"But what about being attacked?" you ask. Well, violence only ends with forgiveness. As a Christian, I believe that last act of violence should have been on Easter weekend about two thousand years ago, but we humans have not figured that out yet. As a student of sociology (among other studies) the author understands that violence and violent behavior, as well as low self-esteem, and a lack of forgiveness may be inescapable, but these are not good reasons to live your life by these concepts without fighting to remove these behaviors and barriers.

One of the most influential men of the Victorian Era was Thomas Carlyle, who put it this way: "Make yourself an honest man, and then you may be sure that there is one less scoundrel in the world." While Carlyle used the word "honest" and "scoundrel" in his description, the phrase transgresses its original meaning simply by adding the words instead that we are here studying. "Make yourself a forgiving man, and then you may be sure there is one less violent man in the world."

The terrorists who struck the United States were clearly wrong in their decision to attack. There is no such thing as a war for peace, either perpetrated by them or the United States. However, the United States, and surely very nearly every country on the planet, may be at a loss to say that violence toward this country was unprovoked. In reality, the United States uses a higher percentage of its money on military than any other country on the planet (22% as of this writing, with the country in a distant second being China at 14%). The United States has a military presence by way of more than 700 overseas military establishments in more than 130 countries (as of 2003) according to the Pentagon's base structure report from that same year. How can any

country live without the threat of war with the United States when the United States has a command post or military base around the corner? How many other countries have military bases inside the United States? The most free country in the world may be free within its borders (which may also be questionable) and simultaneously oppressive to every other country on the planet; or at least 130 of them and their neighbors.

With this being said, did the United States deserve to be hit by terrorists? No. She did not.

One of the underlying purposes of The Rags to Riches Project is to help understand how to draw the line in the sand. "He hit me first," is the most popular excuse known to elementary school teachers and principals as to the reason kids fight on the playground. Is that justifiable? No, not really. Jesus did not hit anyone. Ever. Whether they hit Him or not. Jesus actually had the ultimate motivation for forgiveness, and he demonstrated His own willingness to forgive, even as He was being put to death, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34). Oh, and if you have an argument here that He asked His Father to forgive them, and He did not, try to remember they are both the same Guy! The Holy Trinity is three Gods in One.

Sylvester Stallone recently wrote and starred in Rocky Balboa, a movie about someone who should have quit a long time ago. In this movie, he says most perfectly, "It ain't about how hard you can hit. It's about how hard you can get hit, and keep moving forward." While Mr. Stallone may be just another writer or actor, with this statement, he rises above that. He becomes an example to follow. So, your wife yelled at you when you got home. Can you keep moving forward? So someone cut you off in traffic; can you keep moving forward? So someone hurt your feelings; can you keep moving forward? Sure, you can hit hard, but can you keep moving forward? Do you want your kids to know you can fight back, or keep moving forward? No fighter (Rocky Balboa is about a fighter) ever won a fight while holding a grudge against his opponent because the opponent hit him or her.

We forgive, because it allows us to keep moving forward.

The best reason to forgive yourself and others for the wrongs perpetrated is to help you keep your eyes on the prize! This book is titled *The Rags To Riches Project* because that is the prize. You did not pick up this book to read about reasons why you should forgive people who hurt you, you picked up this book to learn how to be wealthy so the problems that come with the lack of money do not affect you any longer. If you spend an ounce of energy holding onto a grudge or a memory of a wrong committed against you, it is still an ounce of energy that is not available for you to use obtaining your goal of personal and financial independence.

“I do not have anyone who I need to forgive,” you may say. And the author suggests that you be welcomed to the world! You cannot know any other person without having something to forgive; this includes yourself. If you can think of no one who needs to be forgiven, start by forgiving me. Forgive me if *The Rags to Riches Project* is not written in a way that is easy for you to understand. Forgive me for the interruptions I caused in high school history class, or English class. Forgive me for not paying for your college education. Forgive me for not writing this book sooner. Forgive me for the ten years spent ignoring my mother and father. Then look to yourself.

Forgive yourself for showing up late to a meeting or to your job. Forgive yourself for not reading this book sooner. Forgive yourself for losing your temper with your spouse, or your children, or your siblings. Forgive yourself for buying the wrong car, for owning a Mac instead of a PC or vice-versa. Forgive yourself for the unspeakably wicked things you did when you were twelve. If you truly have nothing to forgive, you are not reading this book; you are guiding me to write it.

Forgive your parents because they dressed you funny. Forgive your brothers and sisters for everything that happened when you were growing up. Forgive the neighbor who rode your bicycle without asking you. Forgive the grocer who put pork in the bag when you wanted steak. Forgive the vegetarian who lives down the block for not eating meat. Forgive the carnivore down the street for eating meat. Forgive those you have known the longest, because the list of reasons is longer with them. Forgive each thing. Forgive them before you consider casting a judgment on any thing that they do from this day forward, and then forgive those things too.

Forgive yourself for teasing that misfortunate kid in third grade (kids can be so cruel). Forgive yourself for being that misfortunate kid in the third grade (kids can be so cruel).

Roger owned a bar and grill in a vacation spot up north. He worked hard to make this business support himself and his family. He took on a partner in his second year hoping to boost his cash flow, but the partner tried to take the entire business away from Roger in an unscrupulous and probably illegal manner. Thomas worked for Roger as a bartender and waiter and he knew about the partnership that had gone bad. One night, while working his usual shift, Thomas found out that the former partner was going to stop in socially. He went to Roger and asked how the former partner should be treated. Without parting his teeth (to show emphasis) Roger flatly stated, “You will treat him exactly the same as every other customer. We will not allow him to change us.”

While the reader may believe this story is untrue, the reader would be mistaken. Roger went on to work that bar and grill into a small fortune for his family. And Thomas has never let the author forget how important that moment was in his life; forgiving his declared enemies without any reason to do so.

In order to effectively forgive a wrong done to you, a process should be navigated. Begin by remembering the wrong. Think about it with the time and energy it deserves, and since it is you we are discussing, only you can ultimately decide how much time for each thing. And think it through completely. It is not enough to think, 'Johnny stole my bicycle.' Instead think, 'Johnny stole my bicycle, and I was left without transportation almost a mile from home and rain clouds were forming. I was soaked by the time I walked all the way home, and it took me all the remaining days of summer to earn enough to replace it. And the replacement was not as nice as the bicycle Johnny stole from me.'

Now, the author has no idea about who stole your bicycle, or in fact, what wrong you experienced, or if you know the name of the wrong-doer. Insert those details that make this thought your very own. Be prepared to spend some quality time with this process upon learning this strategy. The author concentrated for a year just to forgive himself.

Our close family members often will commit a wrong toward us without knowing it. This is actually a complement, because they are having trouble within themselves and you are the recipient of it. For example, your brother is having a bad day, and yells at you for leaving your shoes near the door, but not lined up properly on the left side of the door. This outburst truly has nothing to do with you, because there could be no way that your shoes by the door have anything to do with who you are as a person. However, the author imagines that this example is very near to almost every reader at some moment or other in each one's life.

In this case, your brother is having a problem with something going on inside himself, and taking it out on you. This must be forgiven immediately, and forever more. You may choose to help Joe find whatever it is in him that he has not forgiven.

Judy was angry when her husband Alan arrived home. She had just tried to call him, and he did not answer his mobile phone. Although she only waited three minutes from the time she called him until he arrived at their home, and it is illegal to answer a cell phone while driving in their home state, his lack of response to her phone call created in her a mood of anger. He calmly asked her what she needed, he asked in his most pleasing voice for her to explain why she had called. He immediately forgave her for blowing up at him when he arrived at home.

Judy's anger was so pronounced that it consumed her. She no longer even remembered why she had called Alan, only that he did not answer his phone. This mood put Judy on the couch to sulk, leaving no dinner for Alan, who had just come home from a day at work, or their two small

children. Alan made dinner for the family, including Judy and the children while she sat; feeling sorry for herself because she was married to a man who would not even answer the phone.

If Judy had forgiveness, none of this would have occurred. She would have greeted her husband upon his return with something like, “Oh, I’m glad to see you’re home. I just tried to call you; I was hoping you could stop at the store for some milk.”

Instead, Alan and the children had a pleasant meal without the matriarch of the family. By offering forgiveness, Alan was able to defuse what could have been an explosive argument between husband and wife. He could have raised his voice back to Judy; he could have become upset or angry himself, but that reaction would have proven nothing good for either his own well being, or that of his children.

This carried over for Judy, and she still held onto her mood the next morning. She truly wanted to talk with Alan about the lack of milk, eggs, and breakfast meat in the house, and how if there was to be breakfast the next day, someone would have to buy these things. Because she had no way to forgive her husband for not answering the phone, and because it was necessary for her to sulk on the couch, there was no one left to go to the store for these items. As a result, the breakfast meal was chaos, and the children were late for school.

Alan lives each moment thankful that Judy is in his life, never spending a moment worried about things going wrong. He forgave his wife, and actually thanked her for reminding him that he was the one she loved; demonstrating her love and comfort with him by allowing him to see her when she was so upset by something yet unknown to either one of them.

Ultimately, we all need to be thankful. We need to be thankful that we are friends and peaceful with all our neighbors. We need to be thankful that we have all we need to eat. We need to be thankful for our own prosperity. Without this characteristic, we will not be wealthy. It is with this thankfulness in our hearts that we are most free to do good work. And it is by doing good work that we are free to make the most of our own lives, always helping those around us.

While we are working to forgive those who wrong us, there are some things we need to understand. Businesses, corporations, governments and courtrooms have no self esteem. Each may have greed, but no self esteem. The court room believes it has justice, but St Augustine, (considered one of the wisest philosophers of the Catholic Church and all time) said, “Punishment is justice for the unjust.” What St Augustine was saying, aside from the necessity of forgiveness, was that only unjust people will seek punishment from those who commit wrongs. Wow. This flies in the face of everything the author has ever been taught.

Because corporations and businesses are lead by greed and have no self esteem, they will never forgive you. They may want you to think that they forgive you, but they truly only want you to

remain their customer. You, however, do have self esteem (if not, go back to chapter one), and therefore must forgive *them*. You must forgive them for doing things that are not very nice by one human to another. You must forgive the phone company for overcharging that long distance call to your mother. You must forgive the cable company for overcharging whatever they overcharged you. It is necessary to become first; honest with yourself enough to realize who perpetrated the injury, next; who was hurt by it, and lastly; who *you* should forgive for this injury. Did they really say, 'free installation' or is that what you wanted, so that is what you remember? Forgive yourself again.

The good news about businesses is, while they do not have self esteem and will never forgive you, neither will you meet them in Heaven.

Some people find that they cannot forgive without some sort of ritual, and this is a practice that usually harms no one. Many years ago, the author wrote a letter to his father, explaining all the things he felt the father had done wrong, and in no uncertain terms how those things made him feel. Of course, the letter writing was a ritual of sorts. Others have done similar things. Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter to General Meade upon learning that General Lee had escaped to the south after being weakened at the battle of Gettysburg the early days of July, 1863. Lincoln was clearly upset by this non-courageous act by his general.

Executive Mansion,
Washington, July 14, 1863.

Major General Meade

I have just seen your dispatch to Gen. Halleck, asking to be relieved of your command, because of a supposed censure of mine. I am very, very, grateful to you for the magnificent success you gave the cause of the country at Gettysburg; and I am sorry now to be the author of the slightest pain to you. But I was in such deep distress myself that I could not restrain some expression of it. I had been oppressed nearly ever since the battles at Gettysburg, by what appeared to be evidences that yourself, and Gen. Couch, and Gen. Smith, were not seeking a collision with the enemy, but were trying to get him across the river without another battle. What these evidences were, if you please, I hope to tell you at some time, when we shall both feel better. The case, summarily stated is this. You fought and beat the enemy at Gettysburg; and, of course, to say the least, his loss was as great as yours. He retreated; and you did not, as it seemed to me, pressingly pursue him; but a flood in the river detained him, till, by slow degrees, you were again upon him. You had at least twenty thousand veteran troops directly with you, and as many more raw ones within supporting distance, all in addition to those who fought with you at Gettysburg; while it was not possible that he had received a single recruit; and yet you stood and let the flood run down, bridges be built, and the enemy move away at his leisure, without attacking him.

And Couch and Smith! The latter left Carlisle in time, upon all ordinary calculation, to have aided you in the last battle at Gettysburg; but he did not arrive. At the end of more than ten days, I believe twelve, under constant urging, he reached Hagerstown from Carlisle, which is not an inch over fifty-five miles, if so much. And Couch's movement was very little different.

Again, my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely. If you could not safely attack Lee last Monday, how can you possibly do so south of the river, when you can take with you very few more than two thirds of the force you then had in hand? It would be unreasonable to expect, and I do not expect you can now effect much. Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it.

I beg you will not consider this a prosecution, or persecution of yourself. As you had learned that I was dissatisfied, I have thought it best to kindly tell you why. Abraham Lincoln

While you may argue that studying the letters of Lincoln may not be conducive to learning the art of forgiveness, this letter is reprinted here to demonstrate that sometimes even Lincoln needed to vent his frustrations before forgiving those who he felt had dealt him a wrong. Just as the letter the author wrote to his own father was never sent, this letter was found among his papers after Lincoln's death.

Another great way to write down those things done wrong to you is a diary or journal. The author tries to carry one with him at all times. This offers more than just a place to write the wrongs (pun intended). It can also provide you a small tool to behave as Leonardo Di Vinci did, and afford you a place to write whatever idea pops into your head at the time that idea occurs, preventing the loss of the idea. We will cover this in more depth in chapter 8.

Your next step in forgiveness is to imagine yourself as you have grown, that is, take note of who you were before the wrong, and who you are now, making special note of the difference. You may notice that you were a certain way before you were wronged, and you are a new way after the wrong occurred. See the good in it this way. Alan was practicing the art of forgiveness as best he could, but only when he was able to apply his newly found knowledge was he able to see how well it worked in action, also affording him a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to his young children a great way to respond to a potential conflict.

When you forgive any person or entity for any wrong you have felt, the next emotion must be thankfulness. Being thankful, as a rule, is the best way to approach your day. Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" is often thought of as one of the best public addresses ever. Catholics refer to the beginning of this as the Beatitudes. Catholic grade school students are required to memorize these.

To use the Beatitudes for the Rags To Riches Project, let us first understand the times the Sermon was given in comparison to the translation of the words. According to the listing on Wikipedia, “blessed” (which is the first word in eight sentences at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount according to Mathew), translates to “happy.”

Mathew also uses the phrase “in spirit” in the delivery of the famous speech, while Luke leaves these words off. Because Mathew is also cited in the Qumran (otherwise known as the Dead Sea Scrolls) the author also chooses to use Mathew’s telling of the sermon.

Armed with this, let us examine the famous speech’s beginnings. The “poor in spirit” would not be people without enough spirit to buy a loaf of bread, but rather, lacking in a feeling that God is in their lives. Yet, even with this missing element, Jesus promises they will go to Heaven. Those who mourn will be comforted; those who are shy will have all they desire in this world, those who wish for more people to behave well will find people who behave well. Those who forgive will be forgiven. By being “Blessed” in these areas, Jesus is saying they are lucky. They are the fortunate ones. The reason they are the fortunate ones is because this removes the obstacle from view that would otherwise stop them from finding that which they seek.

The word traditionally translated into English as "blessed" or "happy" is in the Greek original μακαριος (makarios). A more literal translation into contemporary English may be “possessing an inward contentedness and joy that is not affected by the physical circumstances”. (239318131)

We are being taught to strive for these circumstances; to be comfortable with them. This makes it easier to keep our eyes on the prize.

Those who mourn are concentrating on the act of mourning, rather than enjoying company of others which takes away from time spent on task, seeking God.

Those who have been persecuted are concentrating on their misfortune and focusing their attention on God. When we concentrate on these things, we need not worry about the opposite, for it will be given us. Jesus may have continued by saying, “Blessed are those who do not think about paying their bills, for their bills will always be paid.” (You were wondering why there would be so much talk on this subject, right?)

MT 5:1 Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them, saying:

MT 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MT 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

MT 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

MT 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

MT 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

MT 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

MT 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

MT 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MT 5:11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

MT 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

MT 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Keep your eyes on the prize. This is what Jesus meant. Concentrate all your energy on that which is positive, fulfilling and helpful to all others, and you will find what it is you seek. That is the message of The Rags To Riches Project.

Take note of that which needs forgiveness in you, and in others. Address it squarely, write it down if necessary, then, and only then, say goodbye to it and never spend a minute on it again. Only with true forgiveness can true self esteem exist. Only in this way can we end violence within our homes, arguments within our families, selfishness, hunger, and war.

By dealing with our anger, frustrations, and self esteem issues, we can lose our rags, and have our riches.

The ability to forgive is one of the most difficult things to master to be sure. Johnse and Roseanna were young adults who managed, as many young adults do, to fall in love with each other, but these two were son and daughter of Devil Anse and Ole Ran'l. Turns out that one had a pig that was claimed to have been the property of the other. There was a court trial to determine the ownership of the pig, and the possessor was proven the rightful owner. Then two boys from the losing side killed one of the men from the winning side. Johnse and Roseanna were on opposite sides of this unforgiving mess.

One was killed on one side, then two killed on the other. Roseanna lost her pregnancy and Johnse ended up marrying another woman, then two were killed on one side and three on the other.

The author is willing to wager that there is not more than one percent of the population of the United States that has not heard about this quarrel, and it is mentioned here for its pure

atrociousness. When the dust settled, nearly thirty years had passed, thirteen people had been killed, including both Johnse and Roseanna, and Devil Anse and Ole Ran'l were still alive. All this happened because of what equates to the cost of a pig.

The author had a conversation with Mary and Jon, who have more than fifteen years invested in the hog raising industry. They assure me that in today's dollars a full grown pig has a value around \$125.00. Ole Ran'l McCoy buried many of his children because of the cost of a pig.

Forgiveness would have been less expensive.

Summary

Remember always, holding onto your thoughts, whether they be positive thoughts or negative thoughts, consumes real energy. The energy consumed also sends a message to the universe to deliver to you like experiences. If you think about good things, good things come to you. Vibrating strings are everywhere, in every thing. It is a substance which thinks. We are all connected.

Forgiving those who hurt us has been taught to us and to every generation since the written word, but it is a teaching which is still not widely understood. Every philosophy which has ever been taught on earth supports the idea of forgiving others in an effort to achieve success. Not forgiving those who hurt us is taught to us and has been taught by every generation to every generation since the dawn of time.

The down side to this philosophy is its inalienable truth; it is another law of the universe. Whether you forgive or not, it was taught to you by your parents before and you are very likely teaching it to your children. And remember, you have the power to change it.

Be thankful! For everything and to every person! Be thankful for the toilet you find in the middle of the night when you were awakened by a full bladder at a most inopportune moment of the night. Be thankful for the quiet time you get when you are alone. Be thankful for the company you are allowed to share. Be thankful for the traffic ticket you received this afternoon (we will discuss why you received that ticket in later chapters).

Keep a journal. Write down those things that happen throughout your day. Write down those things that have hurt you. Let go of all those things that are bottled up inside by getting them out through a pen. The journal also serves as a reminder of all that you are and all that you have been.

Forgive everything. Ask for forgiveness from everyone. No one in your life has escaped the need for you to ask to be forgiven. And no one in your life has escaped the need for you to forgive them. Whenever it is possible, be very specific about that thing which you are sorry came

from you. Be sure to avoid specifics when mentioning them will create more harm than has already been committed.

Imagine your life before you were hurt. Remember as much detail as you can about your growth and maturity. This is a difficult task, since we grow so gradually that it is difficult to remember how mature we were yesterday as compared with today, and you are certainly equipped to accomplish this task. Then remember what happened that caused you harm. Remember the hurt, remember how long it took, and remember how it felt to let it go.

Say goodbye to all those hurts, to all that sorrow, all that pain, and say goodbye to the grudge.

Imagine what it might be like to be in the shoes of the person who may have hurt you. Put together all the parts of the puzzle that made that other person who they are. What happened to that person such that could motivate them to hurt you? How bad did that person's parents treat them before you got there?

Forgiveness is the greatest gift you can give yourself, particularly if you give it away.

Bibliography:

Wallace Wattles, *The Science of Getting Rich*, Destiny Books 1976, originally published 1910.

Mario Puzo (1920 - 1999), *'The Godfather'*

Wikipedia www.wikipedia.com