

Forgiveness Brings Freedom

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NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER

"We need a great healing,
and we need a Great Forgiving.
But healing cannot begin without forgiveness.

We must forgive each other,
Forgive our loved ones,
Forgive our friends,
Forgive our enemies,
Forgive ourselves.

We need to pray even for a person who has done
wrong!

In our Tiyospaye - our family, when two people fight
they are made brothers or sisters.

Forgiveness itself is a powerful medicine.

We need forgiveness to create PEACE!

Mitakuye Oyasin! (all our relations) in the Great
Circle of Life,
where there is no beginning and no end.

INTRODUCTION

Why do we hurt ourselves and suffer for years from the torment of our past?

Why can't we set ourselves free so that we can move on with our lives?

What is the key to freedom?

The key to freedom is forgiving others, this book will explain in detail the route to take to set yourself on a journey of happiness and freedom.

REMEMBERING THE PAST...

For many years my life was caught up in total tragedy and I didn't seem to think that there was a way out. I felt like an animal in a cage and that even though I couldn't see the bars and felt them in everything I did.

I was told when to eat, who to talk to and what to wear. My life seemed to go from happiness as a child to an invisible prison cell where I didn't feel human anymore.

Many of my friends just weren't there anymore and those who did remain for a while turned their backs on me not understanding the torment I was going through.

How could I escape these invisible walls that had surrounded me and when would I stop building more bricks of protection so that I could live a fairly normal life. On the outside everybody thought that I was doing great. I wore a smile that millions would die for and yet deep inside the torment and the pain that I was going through kept me bound.

After 12 years I did make it away from my abuser and yet strangely I was still in his grasp. No not physically anymore but in a strange way that I could not seem to break.

I realized then that the 12 years of abuse had put my emotions, my mind, my being in a cage that was invisible and someone had locked that door and thrown away the key. Now I sat with memories of all the devastating things that had happened to me and I realized I wasn't free.

Flashbacks kept coming each time I smelt alcohol on someone's breath or if someone played a song that I had remembered from back then all the thoughts and pain returned. I had no one to talk too and I thought that my life was going to be this way for ever until the day I passed away and I would always think "Well one day I will be free" not realizing that Freedom could come a lot sooner than me being placed in the ground. But, sadly I never knew just how to find that freedom.

Many told me who cared that "Jesus was the Answer" but I never understood. I moved on with my life after those 12 years carrying my cage and the bricks that surrounded me and actually I was living

in bondage for a lot more years. Now I understand the meaning of God and Jesus but back then I only went to church and listened to people instead of finding things out for myself... Life was hard at that time and I was always seeking for answers but none came.

I remember always taking a shower and trying to wash the dirt from me that wasn't on the outside but on the inside of me. I would stand there as the water poured over me crying and begging God to set me free but nothing really happened. As I came out of the shower I would dry off, put my make up and clothes on and that same smile that everyone knew me by and off I would go about another day. Dying inside and living in bondage over and over again.

Memories, Dreams, Heartaches, Pain, Scars they were all there controlling my life each day until something happened within me .. I can't recall the exact day but it took many years to realize I had to change in order to move forward with my life.

Maybe it was when I realized that after the abuse, I had married 4 times and they all fell apart. I never could understand it but then slowly it started to sink

in that I was choosing the same type of person to be around. The one that was the abuser not the one that really cared about me. Why? Cause I didn't care much about me. I told people I did and acted like I did, but deep inside I hated me for the 12

years I had lived like I had and done what I did. Sadly I never had anyone to help me or even listen. When I did go to tell someone they were shocked and always said "How could you do that? Or Why didn't you just walk away?". I realized that not many really understood what had happened to me so I ended up just not mentioning it and smiling.

Now I modelled for a while and learned how to smile pretty good. It gives a false impression of what is really going on inside of you and it got me by.

Life wasn't easy back then and I found that if I was going to survive I had to play the role of a happy woman and seem confident and self sufficient. Wow that was so far from the truth but it worked for many years.

Time has a way of changing a person and making them realize that life can be happier and full of joy if we allow it to be. But, to allow it to be we have to take a look back at the past and find out just exactly what has caused us all the hurt and pain.

Now there was a time when I used to hear of people say this and laugh at them because I never thought it was necessary and never thought that you needed anyone to help you through your past life of disappointments, hurts, beatings, rapes, abuse etc. I had built up such a phony front that I actually started to believe it myself that I was fine and had conquered it all and all by myself. What a joke that was because there were moments when I found myself going back to the abuse and crying, feeling the pain and just not saying a word to anyone.

People thought I had it all together but I didn't.

LIFE WAS CHANGING...

I found as they years and marriages dissolved my life was changing I was losing so much and it seemed each time I put my trust in someone they let me down or hurt me and it would break my heart. Did I love my x's .. I can honestly say I didn't. Sounds really stupid doesn't it but what happened was I was searching for happiness and yet looking outside of myself was not going to change me until I looked deep within me and change.

Yes, I would pray and pray and yet I got to the place where I felt that maybe my life was just meant to be unhappy and that I was destined to be full of pain and bad memories and that was it ..

My life would always go in one direction and at the end of that road would be another hurt another loss and more tears that shook me so bad. How did I find change? Well it took a long time but it came and I find today there are moments when I have to take an account of things and be sure that I am not moving backwards instead of forward .. it is a daily walking in the right direction and knowing who I am and what direction I am taking.

You can do this too and in the next few pages I am going to tell you how to do it ...

HATRED HIDDEN INSIDE...

I never realized it for a long time but then as time went by I found that to obtain true happiness was to be free from my past. Free from the hurts and all the things that had happened to me. If you have had anything happen to you when you were a child

or young adult and even into your adult years you have built walls as I did ... Those wall protected me inside my cage. The cage I was put in was from others and yet the bricks were put around me by me. Now you may say .. “This makes no sense, I am not in a cage or do I have walls” but let me tell you if you have had hurts in your life you have definitely built a wall around yourself... Here is what you do..

Go back into your childhood.. Think of the things that hurt you. You may have felt rejection from a mother or father or you never felt like you belonged in your family. Maybe you never felt really loved in any way or you thought that this was how all families lived and it was normal, but it wasn't. A normal family .. a mom and dad have children, they cherish their children and those kids come first in everything. The will never injure, hurt or reject them in anyway and they will never let their selfish desires come ahead of making their children happy. Yes there is a little discipline in a home but that is done with love and is only to teach a child how they should be and when it is done right a child always knows deep inside that they are special and loved no matter what ..

Now if a child has been abused in some way sexually, physically, emotionally etc. they tend to think that they have done something to cause it. Many children when their parents separate blame themselves for the split and carry that into the adult life and sadly it usually happens to them as adults too.

If a child has been abused sexually some will take that into the adult life and follow in the abusers footsteps as they feel it is the normal thing to do. Only some will realize that it was wrong and never do to anyone what had been done to them, but they carry the guilt unless they have help to recover.

Recovery comes by realizing first that when that abuse started to happen to you and it can be any age that YOU are not the cause of it. YOU did nothing to start it and YOU did nothing to make it continue in your life.

When we realize that we didn't cause the abuse it is the beginning of understanding the minds of those that caused you the abuse. Most people who have been abused sexually keep doing it themselves.

They are people who may have suffered at the hands of someone they trusted as a child and yet

that person has hurt them so bad. You say “Why don’t they see what it did to them and then change?” Most people are living in their pasts and have so many insecurities that they can’t. Now there are some who can because they have put a lot of hard work and research into the reasons and start to understand that the person who abused them were sick individuals. They start to see that no matter how they had acted it may have still happened to them because the people that did it to them just didn’t care or even try to care.

I never could understand how a person could molest a child when for sex there are so many out here that are willing to have sex anytime and anywhere. My mind was really messed up with this and I used to think that the abuser was really a terrible individual but as time went by I realized that to them it was normal and some didn’t even see it as wrong as long as their own lusts and desires were fulfilled.

Being raised in a good home I was protected from so much and never really realized that people like that existed but when I got in a relationship at 15

and my cycle of abuse started, the rapes, the men, the drugs, the alcohol, the beatings, the low self esteem and then being told if I had only done a certain thing it would never have happened to me. It really made no sense but what did happen was inside of me I was hating, not trusting and becoming a person that wasn't the real me. My good childhood left me at 15 and I became a woman I didn't even know. Many children when they go through a traumatic experience they blame themselves, and live with that thought inside of them, the thought turns into hatred for others, the trust that they did have leaves and they never allow themselves to be loved or to get close to anyone. They tend to hurt others or distance themselves because they have put up walls around them to protect their feelings. Sometimes you don't even know that you are doing it because it has gradually been programmed into you through your thoughts of what happened to you and you just learn to live with it.

Time passes and you find yourself an adult and maybe many years have past by and yet you can't seem to understand why you don't have close friends, you don't want close friends and you find yourself never trusting anyone around you. I know because I lived it.

FORGIVENESS...

Many people when they found out what had happened to me, especially if they were in the church, would say I had to forgive them. Now how could I forgive someone who had stolen so many years of my life and beat me, raped me and did so many other horrible things to me. I knew after a while that it wasn't my fault, I was just 15 years old and coming from a family that loved me didn't realize that there were people out in the world who could be so rotten to anyone. So when people told me to forgive I would just put on my smile and walk away thinking they didn't have a clue to how I felt and they didn't even care to find out.

I found myself living alone after 4 marriages and the first 12 years in this abusive relationship and loving it. I had no one to fight with, no one to beat me, no one to cheat on me, no one to find fault with anything I did and I thought I could really be me. Sadly I was mistaken, I was even in Ministry and many people looked up to me, that was even hard too because they started telling me their problems thinking I had all the answers and yet I didn't.

WHAT MADE ME FORGIVE?

Well I will say I am not religious but I do have a relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ and those are two different things. I don't believe in just going to church on Sunday paying my tythes and then never doing anything else until the next Sunday comes. I believe in living a changed life. Now for many years I was living a changed life from the things I used to do but I still had something missing inside of me.. but wasn't sure what it was.

One day when I was asking God to take my life and use it to really help those in need I felt like he said I needed to forgive my abuser... Now my back went up for sure and I thought that I had really just imagined this inside of me, but the more I prayed the more it came to me to Forgive. But, I didn't do anything and I remember even saying that in my prayers. "GOD, you don't seem to understand.... I didn't abuse, beat, rape, etc etc anyone" and yet that voice inside of me was strong saying to ask for forgiveness.

Now I did want to be totally free but forgive them I just couldn't see it happening. My hurt went deep and I hated them, I realized that if they were drowning and I had a life jacket and I knew that if I threw it in the water to them they would be saved it wasn't going to happen. I would take delight in watching them gasp for breath. Wow what an experience I thought to ask THEM for forgiveness? No Way!

It was only a few days later that I knew in my heart I had to and then to forgive them for what they had done to me. You know I felt good in a sense hating them, because they didn't deserve to be forgiven they caused me so much pain with what they did and others too that I had heard about but deep inside I wanted to walk out that cage I had been trapped in for years and move on with my life. So I thought "What can I lose"

I never even understood at that time the WHY of me asking them to forgive me, but those words kept going through my being and I knew I had to do it.

I found a few on Facebook and wrote them and asked them to Forgive me... only one wrote back and said "Anne, it is I who need to ask you for

forgiveness. Now this was the one who had molested a child that was very close to me and had caused me to lose a family home that I had been given. One of the last few words my dad said to me before he died was “Anne, don’t let anyone take this house” and I promised him faithfully I wouldn’t. But sadly when my x molested this child and I found out about it I filed for divorce immediately and he begged me to speak to this 13 year old and have her lie and say he never did anything and then he said I could keep the family home. I didn’t realize that anyone could take the home from me but with him and I still being married he started charging thousands of dollars of items and within a few months a lien was put on the house and within another few months a lock was put on the door and I lost everything. It hardened me more and yet now God was telling me to forgive this man. I followed through and when he asked for forgiveness I started to see why God had wanted me to forgive him. This man told me that he had been bedridden for 8 years and that he was unable to walk because of his back, then our conversation ended. Something had changed in me when I forgave him. No, I couldn’t get back what I lost but I didn’t seem even to care. Was I happy that he was bed ridden, not really but what it showed me that God says He will fight our battles and He had. His life had changed for the worse and here I was still in good

shape and moving on with my life.

It also made me realize that forgiving others is not for their benefit but for ours. Doesn't that sound strange? I know I thought it did, how could me forgiving those men who had abused me give me a sense of freedom? Well it does. We forgive others to release us from the past. To break down the walls and open that cage that we have lived in for so long. We no longer carry the pain of the past, now there may be times when you do feel the pain. I feel it when I see someone who is living the way I did years ago and are still caught in the trap. But the pain I feel now is for them and not about what I went through. My heart is heavy for the woman who is being beaten or raped because I know what she is going through I lived it ..

To forgive someone who doesn't deserve it sets you free and it will change your life.

No they don't deserve it many of them, and you sure don't have to put yourself back into a situation of being abused ever again.

There is something supernatural when we forgive someone and really mean it ... We start to look at them as a lost soul who is in total misery and has

taken their hurts out on us. Some blame the alcohol or drugs for making them do such things but it goes deeper than that ... They are hurting inside and their cage and bricks are so high that it has blocked their vision from reality.

BUT, you must be set free from the hurts of the past... the hurts are controlling you each day, robbing you of your sleep and a decent life. It has caused anger issues and so many more issues that you may not have even realized.

HAVE YOU EVER SAID THIS?

I want to forgive but I can't or I want to forgive but I really don't feel it inside of me. I know how you feel I went through that myself. See it is easier to hold that hate or grudge against that person and live the way you have been living for years than to let it go by forgiving and move forward. For me it was almost scary and I didn't know if I could live normal at all. **BUT**, I did and I came through. Now don't get me wrong when I did forgive and realize that they were the poor lost souls and not me and what they had done was their fault not mine I saw that they were the victim and not me. They were the losers in all of the abuse not me. It changed my way of thinking and I was able to walk away feeling so much better.

Please feel free to contact Hannah House if you have any questions or you need some help. We are here to help you and we have people who have experienced terrible things that will reach out to you and help you through this process. They know what they are talking about too because they have been through it. So never feel you are alone because you are not, you have people who really care about you and what you are going through. Don't feel ashamed at all .. it is not your fault.

At the end of this book I am going to put some scriptures that might help you too. No I am not going to preach to you all about how you have to do this but it might give you some comfort in your daily walk of forgiveness.

NOW LETS TAKE ANOTHER PATH...

How about if you are the abuser? You are the one who has done some terrible things and can't forgive yourself? No one hurt you but you hurt others and you feel that no one will forgive you and you can't forgive yourself either. See there is always two sides to abuse. The abuser and the abused. We have talked in the last few pages about the ABUSED, but now let's talk to the ABUSER.

BUT, you don't know what I have done? I did something that is horrible and no one will forgive me and I don't even feel that I deserve it... have you said these words? I guess one thing I tell people who have said this to me in counselling is that **"WE ALL** have done things we are ashamed of. Things in secret and things that have been spread all over newspapers and television and here is how I answer them. **YOU** are special. **YOU** were made for a purpose and even though you got side tracked and made a terrible mistake **YOU** are still special. See what many don't realize is that we all have our own hangups and have all made mistakes in our life. We have done things against the law and destroyed many lives in the process. You always have to remember that the past is in the past. Start today and be a new person. Ask God for His help when you can't seem to do things yourself and keep moving forward. **MEN** judge us, **GOD** loves us.

A few years ago I was doing Prison Letters and writing to about 20 inmates a day. Well this one person I had wrote to for about a year, didn't know anything about then and didn't care. My job was to write or send a card to him. Well the one day I get

a letter and he said he had to tell me his story, he felt it was time. Honestly I thought maybe he robbed a bank or something and never thought much of it until I read down the page. He had molested all these children and my heart sank. I had the feeling of disgust come into me and I thought I would never write him again. In fact I took the letter and threw it across the room saying to myself that I would never write another letter. But something happened to me. Inside I heard this little still voice say "Anne, I died for him too and he gave his life to me" I was shocked that those words rung in my ears and I sure didn't care but it nagged at me and I started to think about the situation. I didn't agree with what he had done and I knew those poor children and family members didn't agree to it but God cared about him in spite of what he had done. When he came to God through Jesus he was forgiven and his past was gone. Yes he was never coming out of prison and his sentence was 200 plus years but he had found freedom inside his cage. He had taken the chance to pour out his heart and hope that I would understand and for a few hours I sure didn't but then I remembered what God had done for me and how God had forgiven me many times in the past. My life was different from this mans but the hurts that I had put on to others hurt them just as much and here was I judging a person for their past. You know I had to ask God to forgive me and

I did write back to this man. Well another man shortly after that had written and told me he had raped 16 woman and killed 5 and I could be the next if he ever got out ... I realized that his life was important to God too even though he had taken 5 lives. Time passed as we wrote and he told me some terrible things but one letter came after a few years and he said “WHY have you put up with me for all these years, I have tried so hard to keep you out of my life but you never gave up, WHY?” I told him that God had placed me in this ministry and that if I didn’t forgive others I would never be forgiven myself or released from the cage that I had lived in. It was just a short time later that I got a letter from him and he said he had turned his life around and apologized for all the things he had said to me. He told me of when he was a child and how no one had cared. That day he became part of my family. It wasn’t long after that I wrote but got the letter returned with deceased on it. He had spent well over 45 years in prison and had died. I called the prison and spoke with his counsellor, they said he had died peacefully in his sleep. I stood that day in the post office crying my eyes out. In spite of what he did, I grew to look on him as my family and brother.

We all are family and we all are placed on this earth to love and forgive others as well as ourselves. You want to have peace and freedom? This is where you start.

Understanding God's Hope and Help for Forgiveness

Are you struggling to forgive someone who hurt you? Or are you struggling to forgive yourself? Maybe you are curious about God's forgiveness...wondering if he could forgive you for something you regret.

The good news is forgiveness on all these levels is possible! Both receiving forgiveness and forgiving others is one of the most important things you will ever do. The Bible is full of verses to help us understand how completely God forgives those who confess and believe in his son Jesus. There are also many wonderful scriptures about forgiving others.

Do not live with the burden of unforgiveness any longer. Find freedom through God's word:

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 103:10-14 - He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. For he knows we are but dust.

Hebrews 8:12 - For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 - Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

Luke 23:34 - As he hung on the cross - “And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

We Should Forgive Others as God Forgives Us
Ephesians 4:31-32 - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Mark 11:25 - And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

Colossians 3:13 - Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Matthew 6:12 - From the Lord’s Prayer - “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Romans 12:18-21 - If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave I to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 5:39-41 - But I tell you not to resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also; if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well, and if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

Proverbs 17:9 - Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.

Luke 6:35-36 - But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Proverbs 10:12 - Hatred stirs old quarrels, but love overlooks insults.

John 14:26-27 - But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

1 Peter 5:7 - Let him have all your worries and cares, for he is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.

Philippians 4:13 - For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.

Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy
O Divine Master, grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be loved, as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born to Eternal Life
Amen

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

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