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ARTICLE 2: Forgiveness Seems Impossible

Yes, I understand that you may feel that “Forgiveness Seems Impossible,” but it is possible, and if you are serious and dedicated in resolving these deep issues in life, then you will successfully be headed toward your destination, The Restoration Place. This is the place where you will have finally asked for forgiveness from God, forgiveness from our offender, and even forgiveness from ourselves. Until then, we have several steps to take as we cross our forgiveness bridge with Jesus

In this article, let’s begin with a very poignant poem which points us to the miracle of forgiveness in silence and how to experience the wonderful embrace of God’s love.

The Miracle of Forgiveness

By Lewis B. Smedes

We perform a miracle that hardly anyone notices

We do it alone

Other people can help us, but when we finally do it

We perform the miracle in our inner selves

We do it silently

No one can record our miracle on tape

We do it invisibly nor our miracle on film

We do it freely

No one can ever trick us into forgiving someone

We've only just begun our journey toward forgiveness together in article one, "Why Should I Forgive Someone Who has Hurt Me?" So, as we continue our first steps crossing over our imaginary bridge, let's see where Jesus is leading us. He says, *"Be on guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him: and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent', forgive him."* (Luke 17:3-4) Wow! Seven times? Is this the limit? No, Jesus is saying you must continue to forgive. It seems impossible, but Jesus says we can do it and we must!

In life, there are so many ways we often offend one another, but we may not have the spiritual knowledge to help us forgive. We might take a look at the issue of betrayal, which may be something you are experiencing even now. It may seem to be impossible for you to forgive, especially when a spouse has been un-faithful. In the beginning, feelings of rage and bitterness seem insurmountable and there seems to be no way under heaven to resolve the pain. You may wonder how can I forgive something this big? Even if I did forgive, how can I forget?

Massive hurt, bitter disappointment, betrayal, devastation, unspeakable sadness, painful rejection. These are the range of emotions, the Himalayas that stand before us. I know, because I have felt every one of these emotions because of betrayal. For a time all of these feelings freeze us or immobilize us somewhere in our own "twilight zone". We still go on with life, but no one knows what turmoil is growing and festering inside our minds and inside our souls (that is - no one but Jesus.)

The exciting news is that through our brokenness, our 'trapped' unforgiveness can be miraculously transformed with God's grace in such a profound way, even more than we knew possible. Are you asking, but how do I get there? The first step is to undergo some stretching and discomfort. This is the inner work that frees us from the past and makes us stronger, wiser, more adaptable human beings.

Forgiveness is a lifelong commitment. It means that you will continue to keep doing it. It isn't enough to forgive today and then return to the same offense tomorrow. No one said this was going to be easy, but the benefits are always worth the time and investment.

Total forgiveness involves an additional element, the element of prayer. We should pray for God's blessings to rain on the lives of our offenders. Jesus said, *"But I tell you; Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."* When we pray for the one who hurt us it means that they will be blessed. Hold on now! It means that God will show favor to them rather than punish them, and they will prosper in every way. In other words, we pray that they will be dealt with as we want God to deal with us. It is the application of the Golden Rule. We should pray that they will receive total forgiveness, just as we want it for ourselves.

We have to step out of our old comfort zone and be willing to struggle with some new growing pains. The person we are within with our old ways of seeing, thinking, and acting has to "die" in order to let the "new" person be spiritually born again.

Spiritual growth only happens in the trenches of real life. We all can move on and grow toward inner maturity and wholeness, even if the one who harmed us never does. Why does forgiveness seem impossible to us? Could it be that it's just not natural to us? I believe this is true. Jesus came here to show the supernatural ways to live. He came to teach us how to adopt new attitudes of the heart that help us to develop a new nature, a godly character, the character of Christ.

Every one of us carries a list of “unforgivable” sins, the ones that condemn us. They may be just a lie or repeated failures in relationships. The end result is our legalistic need for self-punishment. To tell you the truth, the dichotomy of it is all is that what seems to be unsatisfied hunger for justice is in actuality an unsatisfied hunger to be forgiven.

This is where we get hung up, because we think that forgiveness must be a feeling. We say, “I wish I could forgive, but I don't feel very forgiving or I wish I could forgive myself, but I don't feel like I'm forgiven.” Jesus knows how volatile and unreliable our emotions are. He knows that forgiveness restores health and wellness, as well as peace with God, others and with ourselves. His purpose is to teach us wholeness and spiritual maturity not with feelings, but with conscientious choice.

There is great power at work when we choose to forgive and that power is called grace. Grace is that unusual force that makes forgiveness become real in us. This is the power that makes our inner light come on. It is the power that transforms an idea in our heads into a drive we know we must live by. Grace is the transforming touch of God Himself.

We are all at different levels with our walk with Christ. Some of us are leaping while others are taking baby steps. The process, no matter what level leads us to perceive His wonderful, restful forgiveness. Jesus knows us so well. He tells us to “Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” This is why we must be growing in our relationship with God if we want to grow in spiritual and psychological health. Our Father gave us the gift to choose how we will focus our inner energies. It is His empowering grace that makes a life of forgiveness possible. Forgiveness is not just about the boundaries of our humanity. It is about the faith we have in God.

There are many lessons Jesus is teaching us in our journey across our “forgiveness bridge”. He wants us to ponder over them and pray that your offender will receive total forgiveness, just as you want to be forgiven yourself.

My friend, I am still holding your hand as we take one forward step together with our goal to reach the “Restoration Place”. We've only just begun, so make up your mind to stay with this. God is with you! You can also review these eight studies on television program. Just go NotesOnLife.org and click on WATCH TV or look for the section on “Crossing Over The Bridge to Freedom”.

Let's Pray:

Lord Jesus,

Teach me forgiveness
Look down deep inside of me
You know every part of me
help me set my captives free from
my chains

In Jesus name,
AMEN