

# IN THE MARGINS: The weight of unforgiveness – why healing starts with letting go

By Tony Martin  
Editor

Hey, y'all!

You ever notice how easy it is to hold onto hurt? We carry it around like some sort of security blanket, thinking it'll protect us from getting hurt again. But in reality, it's more like a chain that keeps us bound, weighed down by the past. I've been thinking a lot lately about how forgiveness isn't about forgetting the wrongs done to us – it's about healing the wounds those wrongs created.

We've all been there. Someone says something cruel, betrays your trust, or causes deep pain. And what's our instinct? To hold onto that hurt, maybe even nurse it a little. We replay the incident over and over in our minds, as if reliving it will somehow make it better. But, spoiler alert: it doesn't.

Bitterness becomes a burden, and instead of protecting us, it eats away at our peace and joy. Forgiveness, though? It's the key to breaking free. And no, it's not about pretending the hurt never happened or giving the offender a free pass. It's about letting go for *your* sake – so that God can begin to mend your broken heart.

## A Story of Forgiveness

Let me tell you a story about a guy named Tom. Tom had a pretty good life, solid family, good job, everything seemed to be on track. That is until a close friend of his – someone he trusted deeply – betrayed him in a business deal. His friend

lied, manipulated, and ended up costing Tom a big chunk of his savings. We're not talking a minor offense here – this was a real, personal, and financial blow.

Now, Tom was furious. And rightly so! He had been wronged in the worst way by someone he thought was a friend. For months, maybe even years, Tom held onto that anger. He'd go to bed stewing about it, wake up thinking about it, and over time, the bitterness settled deep into his heart. He wouldn't even entertain the idea of forgiveness.

He'd say things like, "Why should *I* forgive him? He's the one who ruined my life!" And honestly, who could blame him for feeling that way?

But here's where things started to shift. Tom noticed the toll it was taking on him – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He was exhausted all the time, snapping at his family, and no matter what he tried, he just couldn't find peace. That's when a trusted mentor sat him down and said something that hit him right between the eyes: "Tom, forgiveness isn't about your friend; it's about you. You're letting him live rent-free in your heart and mind, and it's poisoning your life."

That thought stuck with Tom. He realized that holding onto bitterness wasn't hurting his former friend; it was hurting *him*. It was robbing him of joy, robbing him of peace. But the idea of forgiving still seemed impossible – like he'd be admitting defeat or letting the guy off the hook. However, his mentor challenged him with this: "Forgiveness doesn't mean you condone what he did. It means you're giving it over to God and letting go of the need for revenge."

So, after a lot of wrestling with himself and with God, Tom decided to forgive. It didn't happen overnight, and it wasn't a magical moment of instant relief. But over time, as Tom prayed and asked God to help him release the bitterness, he

felt a genuine shift in his heart.

One day, he realized the anger wasn't there anymore. The weight of that grudge had lifted, and in its place, he felt lighter, freer – like he could breathe deeply again. Tom didn't forget what happened, but he let go of the hold it had on him. He trusted God to handle justice and healing, and it changed everything.

### **Forgiveness Is for You**

Tom's story is a reminder that forgiveness isn't just something we do for the other person. It's something we do for *ourselves*. When we choose to forgive, we're not saying the hurt didn't matter. We're saying it matters so much that we refuse to let it keep us in bondage any longer.

The truth is, God doesn't want us walking around weighed down by past pain. He knows how damaging bitterness can be. In fact, scripture tells us in Ephesians 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

God understands our pain – He knows every tear and every heartache. But He also knows that holding onto unforgiveness only deepens that wound. Forgiveness, on the other hand, opens the door for Him to bring healing into those broken places. And here's the beautiful thing: God's not asking us to do it alone. He gives us the strength and grace to forgive, even when it feels impossible.

### **The Healing Power of Letting Go**

It's easy to think that holding onto anger gives us control. But the opposite is true – it controls *us*. Letting go doesn't mean we're weak; it means we're strong enough to trust God with the outcome. It means we're willing to walk in freedom

instead of chains.

If you're carrying bitterness or unforgiveness today, I encourage you to take a step toward healing. Pray about it. Ask God to help you release that burden and trust Him to mend your broken heart. It won't be easy, and it probably won't happen overnight. But as you surrender it to God, you'll start to feel that weight lift. And in its place, you'll find peace, joy, and a heart that's free to heal.

Forgiveness isn't about forgetting the pain. It's about refusing to let it define your future. Let God do what only He can do – heal your heart, restore your peace, and bring true freedom into your life.

Until next time, remember that forgiveness sets you free.