

# The Weapon of Forgiveness

## How to Combat Satan's Chokehold on Your Prayer Life

By Kerry Shuey



My husband and I had the humbling opportunity of traveling to Pakistan in 2008—our second time—to minister to precious brothers and sisters who live amidst great challenges and danger. In a mountain campground setting, we were teaching and praying with people, some of whom had traveled long distances for many hours to be taught the Word of God. One of the topics I taught was forgiveness.

As one who had a healthy dose of self-righteousness and who had battled criticism and judgment, I had been learning much about asking for and extending forgiveness.

### Forgiveness as a Weapon

I began learning about the power of forgiveness years earlier when I studied the account of Stephen (Acts 6–7). This first martyr of the early Church died a painful death by stoning, and these words were his last: “Lord, do not hold this sin

against them" (Acts 7:60). After Stephen forgave his enemies and murderers (including Saul, who stood by watching), the Church began to grow and spread. Eventually Saul, the great persecutor, became Paul, the great missionary.

God began to show me that forgiveness is a weapon we can use to defeat the enemy. It is a key that will unlock many doors for us. I learned that forgiveness releases us from a cage of resentment and bitterness that can cause all kinds of destruction in our lives and the lives of others. God showed me that I needed to forgive because I had been forgiven of so many of my own sins (Ps. 103:3). He showed me that if I want to be like Jesus, I need to forgive (Luke 23:34). And He showed me that if I want to be forgiven by God, I need to forgive others (Matt. 6:12).

My unforgiveness and bitterness, I learned, yields ground in my life to Satan, and that can lead to all kinds of sickness—emotional, physical, and spiritual—and hinder me from fulfilling my calling.

We witnessed a sad example of this while ministering in India. We traveled all evening to a remote village where many poor and sick people had assembled and were worshiping. After we spoke, many came for prayer—mostly for physical healing. Without medical help, they were desperate. But they believed Jesus could heal them. As we prayed for them, almost all were touched by God's power and healed, including a baby who was burning up with a raging fever. As the young mother with pleading eyes handed the baby to me, I felt the heat of his little body, and cried out to God. I could feel the fever going away, and his eyes became bright and alive!

Last to be prayed for was an elder's wife who was crippled with arthritis and with obvious bitterness. I asked her if she had resentment toward someone, and she said she had been wronged over a boundary dispute and that she would "never forgive that person!" I am sad to say that she left, taking

her bitterness and painful arthritis with her; God would not answer her prayer. Psalms 66:18 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (kjv).

## **Forgiveness Defined**

In my journey to learn about the power of forgiveness, God has been teaching me what forgiveness is and what it is not.

1. Forgiveness is excusing a fault, completely canceling the expected payment for a wrong, and giving up my right to hurt someone for hurting me.
2. Forgiveness is not approval or denial of a wrong committed.
3. Forgiveness is not forgetting or pretending the wrong never happened.
4. Forgiveness is a process whereby we acknowledge our hurt but "drop our case" and surrender our pain to the Lord.

## **Hindrance to Answered Prayer**

I also learned another important lesson: my unforgiving spirit can hinder answers to my prayers. I read in Matthew 6:14–15 that if I forgive others, God will forgive me. But if I don't, He won't forgive me. The same message comes across in Matthew 18:27–35.

Then I read this in Mark 11:25–26: "When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." My unforgiving, resentful attitude hindered me from the joy of an intimate walk with God. It robbed me of the victory and revival in which God wanted me to live. It caused me to not even want to pray, which is Satan's delight!

When I began to see and understand these valuable truths, I passionately wanted to be one who is quick to forgive. I realized that every opportunity to be offended or bitter is a

trap of Satan to destroy my prayer life! And the more I practice forgiveness, the greater my capacity is to love, forgive, pray, and intercede for others.

God began to open doors for me to speak and teach on forgiveness. As the Holy Spirit touched people's hearts, minds, and bodies, they began experiencing healing and freedom. They were overcome with tears of repentance and joy.

Much of the bondage and defeat in people's lives is due to unforgiveness. Much of the Army of God is crippled, powerless, and prayerless, because they have not used the weapon of forgiveness. In their bitterness and woundedness, they have dropped out of the battle—or they are hanging out in the “M.A.S.H. Unit” way too long. They delay their healing by deciding not to forgive every offense and offender.

Forgiveness is an act of obedience followed by God's grace. When we forgive, we can even love and pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

## **Even the Most Grievous**

So here we were in Pakistan, where many of our brothers and sister had experienced terrible abuse, mistreatment, and persecution. While teaching on forgiveness I noticed a young lady with a sad, troubled countenance. By the end of the message, when we offered a time to forgive, her tears were flowing. Obviously the Holy Spirit was working.

Later, during testimony time, this young woman made her way to the microphone. She told her story of how she and her family lived in the area where the Taliban is very strong. She had seen much oppression and death in the Christian community. Her own mother had been killed by the Taliban. As she spoke, I couldn't hold back the tears.

“Today, I was able to forgive my enemies,” she said, “even

those who killed my mother. I want to now help others receive this healing and deliverance from the bitterness and pain we can live under.”

Before she left, this precious girl asked me to pray a “mother’s blessing” over her, which I gladly and humbly did. We have corresponded ever since. She went on to get more training in China and England, and she now teaches healing prayer, especially to the victims of suicide bombings. She is praying for a building to be used as a healing prayer center. Her prayers avail much! As she forgave that which might seem unforgiveable, God’s grace turned her life around and catapulted her forward into a life of prayer ministry.

I have another amazing friend who has learned the freedom and blessing of forgiveness, and what God will do in an almost “unforgiveable” situation. As a child, my friend was repeatedly molested by her father. Understandably, she left home as soon as she could, but the pain and brokenness of her childhood followed her until God’s grace enabled her to forgive her father. When she did, her prayer for his salvation was answered. Later, she was able to minister to him in a time of great weakness, and he asked her to forgive him for what he had done to her.

She has gone on to become an intercessor who serves on her church’s prayer team. She is especially effective in ministry to victims of sexual abuse, sharing the message of forgiveness.

## **Effective Prayer Warriors Needed**

God wants to release those in the Body of Christ who are crippled by an unforgiving spirit. This is an hour when an army of effective prayer warriors is needed. So, how do we forgive?

1. Admit that you are tired of living in the bitterness and

consequences of unforgiveness. Choose not to let it reign in your heart.

2. Decide that you want the freedom of forgiveness. This choice is not based on whether the person—living or dead—deserves forgiveness or confesses any wrongdoing. It is an act of our will in obedience to God.
3. Ask God to forgive and bless those who have offended you—if they are still living. Forgiveness is always followed by God's grace. Obviously you cannot bless those who are not living, but you can still forgive in your heart.

Let us frequently use the weapon of forgiveness, so that we may be like Jesus. He offered the ultimate forgiveness—and He is the greatest Intercessor. Let's join Him, advancing His Kingdom through our prayers. He has called us to love the lost, the hurting, and even our enemies.

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