

Learning to Forgive, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 18:21–22

Code: 2333

INTRODUCTION

A. The Illustration of Forgiveness with Children

Our Lord has been teaching on the childlikeness of the believer in Matthew 18. And as we come to verse 21, He teaches that we are to be forgiven like children, with whom there is a great sense of tolerance because of their weaknesses, ignorance, and inabilities. Being childlike is an indication that we are going to fail. There are going to be times when we do the wrong things because we are still in the process of maturing and ordering our behavior. But when we do sin, and after discipline has been enacted, we also are to be forgiven just as children are to be forgiven.

People can rather easily hold grudges against adults, but it's somewhat abnormal to hold them against children. We tend to forgive children rather readily. However, we have difficulty forgiving adults and therefore need to remember the teaching of this passage, that believers are to be treated like children in a spiritual sense. We need the same kind of gracious continuing forgiveness that a child does.

B. The Implementation of Forgiveness in the Church

Forgiveness is a great virtue. I really believe that it is the key to the unity of the church. A necessary element of love and meaningful relationships, forgiveness constantly tears down the barriers that are built up through sin and that separate us from one another in bitterness and anger.

1. Its Exhortation

a. Proverbs 19:11 -- "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." In other words, if you want to see man at his best, it is when he forgives and forgets a sin committed against him. b. Ephesians 4:32 -- As Christians, we are to be "forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven [us]." Based upon the fact that we have received the forgiveness of God in Christ, we are to offer forgiveness to others. c. Colossians 3:13 -- Paul similarly told the Colossian Christians that they should be "forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

It is the glory of a man that he should forgive another and the obligation of a Christian who has been forgiven so much by God through Christ to do likewise. Therefore, we should be eager to forgive.

2. Its Example

When you look in the Old Testament, you find that there is an exalted perspective on forgiveness.

a. Genesis 50 -- We all remember with a great sense of respect the wonderful story of Joseph who forgave his brothers, saying, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore fear ye not; I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them" (vv. 20-21). Joseph forgave his own brothers who had thrown him into a pit and sold him into slavery, and told everyone that he was dead. b. 1 Samuel 24 -- Also, with great respect, you probably remember the tender forgiveness and sensitivity that David exercised toward Saul, who had spent himself trying to murder David. Although David could easily have thrust his sword through the sleeping Saul, he did not do so, because he had a heart of forgiveness. c. 1 Samuel 25 -- We find David again as a model of forgiveness, forgiving Nabal for the sake of Abigail, Nabal's pleading wife.

Forgiveness is the glory of a man. It is the highest human virtue. You show me an honorable man

with real character, and I'll show you a man who can forgive. You show me a man who carries a bitterness deep down in his soul, and I'll show you a man without character. You show me a person who cannot release some vengeful, bitter, antagonistic, hateful attitude toward somebody, and I'll show you a man who knows not either the glory of a man or understands the forgiveness of God to him. It is the best of a man to forgive. And because it is the heart of God to forgive, when man forgives, he radiates that which is true of the image of God. Forgiveness is so basic to God's heart that it certainly should be an expression of the heart of God's children, who themselves, are in constant need of forgiveness.

Now, our Lord has just concluded a section on disciplining sinners, masterfully following it up with a section on forgiving them. Beginning in verse 21, we see...

I. THE ENQUIRY ABOUT FORGIVENESS (v. 21)

"Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"

After all of this discussion of discipline and how we are to confront the sinner and restore him if he repents, Peter asks a very insightful question. Knowing the tendency of man to fail because he knew how many times he needed to be forgiven himself, Peter asks Jesus how many times he is to forgive and restore a person who has been disciplined. He could anticipate the inability of humankind to turn their life all the way around and not sin anymore, and so he realized that one may have to forgive several times.

A. The Text About Forgiveness

1. Its Context (v. 21a)

"Then came Peter..."

Sitting together in the house at Capernaum where our Lord is teaching with a little infant in His arms, Peter leans forward and comes close to Jesus, possibly after a short time interval from the former teaching. May I say as a footnote that we are greatly indebted to Peter for a lot of things, one of them being that he asked questions. God bless people who ask questions, because when they ask the right people, they get answers that benefit all others who are listening. Though Peter's quick tongue and inquisitive mind did get him into trouble on occasion, he was able to elicit out of the Lord a lot of profound teaching, because he asked questions.

In effect, Peter is asking, "Now look, Lord, let's say we go after this guy and restore him as our brother, but he sins again. Does forgiveness have a limit?" Now that's really the salient question of the whole text. Does forgiveness have a limit? Do you say to somebody, "Look, man, you have gone too far. There are some things that I can forgive only so long. I have already forgiven you five times for what you done. That's it--you have gone beyond the limit"?

2. Its Content (v. 21b)

"...Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"

Now when Peter asks if seven times is enough for a limit to forgiveness, he was probably waiting for congratulations from the Lord like, "Marvelous, Peter, you are so magnanimous." The "against me" does not necessarily mean that the sin was directly against you personally, but that the sin was against you either directly or indirectly. In other words, all sin in the assembly affects the assembly. However, the idea that Peter adds the "against me" really applies in a situation where you feel the lack of forgiveness that might motivate you to say, "That's enough out of you. I'm not going to forgive that."

I've actually heard people say, "I will never forgive that person for what they've done to me." Not long ago, I had a well-known man in the ministry confront me, cursing me and calling me every name he could think of, because he had carried vengeance in his heart toward me for five years over something that he didn't like about me. Now whether he was right or wrong about what he didn't like isn't even an issue. What is an issue is his anger and his lack of forgiveness. He said to me, "I will

never forget what you said!" That's the very antithesis of both the glory of a man and the heart of God.

B. The Testimonies of Forgiveness

I think most people find it hard to forgive even one time. They reflect the attitude of Louis XII, who said, "Nothing smells so sweet as the dead body of your enemy." Forgiveness is very foreign to man's nature. That's why we're all somewhat shocked when we see...

1. The Forgiveness of Jesus

As Jesus was dying on the cross with people having spit on Him, shoved a crown of thorns onto His brow, and hammered nails through His limbs, He hung there naked with flies and blood as a cloak before the whole watching world. Yet He looked down and said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..." (Lk. 23:34a).

We're also shocked to read about...

2. The Forgiveness of Stephen

As Stephen was pushed off a ledge and crushed beneath the bloody stones of his executioners, he said, "...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge..." (Ac. 7:60). There is no doubt that the graciousness of Stephen's testimony affected one in particular who stood by and observed: Saul, who later became known as Paul the Apostle.

God's people are to be like Christ and like Stephen. We are to forgive at once every sin, regardless of who the sinner is and whether he repents or not. Do you understand that? We are to hold no grudges against a person who has wronged us, no matter how they have wronged us or how deeply we are wronged.

3. The Forgiveness of God

We must also realize that it is primarily God who has been wronged. In Psalm 51:4, David said, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight...." He cried out to God for forgiveness against whom he had sinned, and God granted it to him. Likewise, when you have sinned, you have sinned against God. Every sin you've ever sinned in your whole life was committed against Him. It's as if you walked into His holy presence in the middle of heaven and sinned in front of His throne. But in spite of such defiance, God has forgiven every sin you've ever sinned if you have trusted in Christ.

Therefore, consider this if you have a hard time forgiving: Are you better than God in that you can't forgive what God forgives? Furthermore, you can't even comprehend the full evil of sin, because you are not omniscient and you are not so holy that you can understand its utter sinfulness.

C. The Types of Forgiveness

God forgives a Christian in a judicial sense whether he confesses his sin or not. Judicial forgiveness occurs when you are saved and God forgives all your sins...past, present, and future. But then, there is a daily relational kind of forgiveness, which opens up the loving fellowship and communion you desire to experience with God. Whereas the judicial kind of forgiveness is a once-for-all positional act of God, the relational forgiveness is that daily cleansing from God that just keeps the channel open. These two types of forgiveness are to be expressed among ourselves as well.

For example, when a believer sins, you are to immediately forgive that person in your heart. This resembles the judicial act on the part of God. However, he doesn't experience full forgiveness, relationally speaking, until he has repented of the sin and then entered back into the joy of that broken relationship. So, the two kinds of forgiveness that we see as characteristic of God are also characteristic of our forgiveness as well. The immediate forgiveness we should have for someone is identified in 1 Peter 4:8, where Peter said, "...for love shall cover the multitude of sins." Then, when the restoration process takes place, we can give him the full forgiveness of fellowship. This is the attitude, I believe, that the Lord is teaching in Matthew 18:21-35.

We always forgive, then, by forgiving in our hearts whether the person ever gets right in their life or not; that's the internal forgiveness. And then, later on when they have restored themselves and

things have been set right, we give them that external kind of forgiveness that makes the relationship all that it should be. That's a very important concept.

So, the enquiry, "How many times do I forgive? Seven times?" leads to...

II. THE EXTENT OF FORGIVENESS (v. 22)

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."

A. The Tradition of the Jews

Now, what did Peter have in mind when he suggested "seven times" as a generous limit to forgiving? You can understand why he thought what he did, when you realize that Jewish tradition allowed a person to forgive someone only three times. Let me show you...

1. The Scriptures Behind Their View

a. Amos 1"Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.... Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.... Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.... Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment.... Thus saith the LORD: For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away their punishment..." (vv. 3a, 6a, 9a, 11a, 13a).b. Job 33:29 -- Because a similar statement was made in this verse, the Jews concluded that someone could be forgiven three times. After that the individual received the blast of divine judgment.

2. The Statement of Their View

Misinterpreting such passages, the Jews justified the limit of three times for forgiveness, saying, "If three transgressions fills up the measure of God's forgiveness, men can't go beyond God." Certain Jewish scholars reflected this position: Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said, "He who begs forgiveness from his neighbor must not do so more than three times." Rabbi Jose ben Jehuda said, "If a man commits an offense once, they forgive him; if he commits an offense a second time, they forgive him; if he commits an offense a third time, they forgive him; the fourth time they do not forgive him."

3. The Surpassing of Their View

Doubtless, when Peter asked if he should forgive as many as seven times, he thought he was generously going beyond his own tradition. He probably thought he would be commended and he no doubt had some degree of a smirk of self-congratulation on his face, thinking how generous he had been. And I might add in his favor, that his three years with Jesus had made some impact on him. Most likely he had picked up the merciful, generous, gracious, kind, and forgiving spirit of Jesus, which is why he knew that Jesus would go beyond the tradition of His own people. In the same sense, Peter had advanced beyond the men of his own nation and the Lord was about to lead him even further so that he would understand more fully what grace was.

B. The Teaching of Jesus

1. Stated

Jesus' reply of "seventy times seven" would probably have taken Peter's breath away, because it was so out of proportion to the magnanimity that he had designed in his own mind when he said seven. The number is so large that one would lose count if he tried to keep a record of the times he forgave. Obviously, Jesus didn't mean for this instruction to be taken literally. He merely picked up on Peter's suggestion and multiplied it by seventy to make the point that there should be no limit to forgiveness.

There's an interesting comparison that can be made with Genesis 4:24, where it talks about vengeance being repaid seventy-seven times. Because the Lord said forgiveness should extend to seventy times seven, whatever basis there would be even for legitimate vengeance is dwarfed by an infinitely greater one for gracious forgiveness.

2. Supported

a. Luke 17:3-4 -- In a parallel passage, we find further evidence that our Lord is really calling for an

indefinite number: "Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Again, playing off the same number, we see Jesus teaching unlimited forgiveness. John Wesley said, "If this be Christianity, where do Christians live?" That's a fair question. b. James 2:13 -- "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy...." This is the same important truth from a different perspective. We are called to bestow the same mercy on others that God has bestowed on us. Now, the thought here is this: The extent of forgiveness is unending, limitless. Even if it were possible for a person to sin against you 490 times in one day, that person should still be forgiven. So don't parade the vengeance, bitterness, and anger of your unforgiving spirit as if it were a virtue--it is the very opposite of a virtue. It is not even the glory of humans, let alone a manifestation of the heart of one who has in him the Spirit of God. So, the enquiry about forgiveness leads to Jesus' statement about the extent of forgiveness. Now, let's examine ...

III. THE EFFECT OF FORGIVENESS

A. The Reasons We Are Called to Forgive

First of all, we are called to forgive because of...

1. The Example of Jesus -- Ephesians 4:32 teaches us that since we have been forgiven by God for Christ's sake, we ought to forgive each other.
2. The Glory of Man -- We are also called to forgive because it is the best of man, as stated in Proverbs 19:11.
3. The Character of Saints -- Forgiving is a vital part of Christian virtue (Col. 3:13).
4. Freedom from Bitterness -- Fourth, we are called to forgive in order to free our conscience from the root of bitterness that Hebrews 12:15 talks about.
5. The Deliverance from Satan -- Fifth, we are to forgive in order to deliver ourselves from Satan. Second Corinthians 2:11 says he'll "get an advantage of us" if we don't forgive.
6. The Avoidance of Chastening -- Sixth, we are to forgive in order to deliver ourselves from divine chastening (Lk. 6:35- 37).
7. The Reciprocation of Forgiveness -- We must forgive or else we will not be forgiven ourselves. We just saw in James 2:13 that the one who shows no mercy will receive none.

B. The Revelation That Calls Us to Forgive

Let's look more closely at this last reason, which is also stated in...

1. Matthew 6:12, 14-15

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

a. The Passage Explained This amazing statement about forgiveness bases the forgiveness we receive upon our act of forgiving others. You ask, "Is He talking to Christians?" Yes. This is a believer's prayer, because the nonbeliever would not be able to address God as "our Father." This raises the question, "In what sense can a Christian have unforgiven sins?" Not in the judicial sense, which insures that your sins are covered by the blood of Christ. But a Christian can have unforgiven sin in the sense that even though his sin is covered positionally in that God has judicially paid its price through the sacrifice of Christ, he may have not confessed daily sin in order to receive that parental and relational forgiveness that keeps the communion vital and the joy full. In other words, you have been forgiven by the heart of God, but you can't enter into the fullness of that if your relationship still has some unsettled accounts with God. It's no different than in the relationship between a Christian and another Christian. I might forgive you in my heart the moment you sin, but we will never know the outworking of that kind of forgiveness in our relationship until you come and repent and things are made right. Therefore, if you don't forgive someone else as a Christian, two

things take place: number one, you cannot know the forgiveness of God in terms of communion, fellowship, joy, and all which ought to be a part of your relationship with the Lord. Number two, you will experience the chastening of God. Because when there's an outstanding sin account and He has not parentally forgiven that, God is going to bring to bear on your life certain chastenings to refine that unrefined area. By the way, the debts that verse 12 is talking about are spiritual debts, or sin, which is made clear by the use of "trespasses" in verse 14 (cf. Mk. 11:25-26). Hence, we are to take the sins of others and, according to the literal Greek, hurl them away, that ours in turn may be hurled away. b. The Priority Exhorted So, you may need to examine your life. Are you looking at your life and making comments like these? "I don't see the kind of joy I ought to see in my life. I don't have that kind of fulfillment spiritually. I don't seem to have the power of God in my life. It seems as though I'm always being chastened, I'm always struggling. I've examined my life, and I'm unaware of any moral sins." If any of those statements apply to you, then you better backtrack and find out if, in fact, there is a grudge in your heart for never having forgiven a person. If you do have some bitterness that refuses to forgive, you will never experience the forgiveness of God. Though you will die and go to heaven because your sins are paid for in Christ, being transactionally forgiven on the books, you can't experience the fullness of joy because you won't forgive. c. The Parallel Examined Now, this is not some isolated truth. We saw it in James 2:13, and the disciples' prayer in Matthew 6; and in case you're still unconvinced, consider Mark 11:25-26: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have anything against any, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, forgive your trespasses." Here again is the same very important truth. d. The Priority Expressed In Matthew 6:12 we ought to note that the Greek literally says, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgave our debtors." That's very important, because it puts our forgiving before God's forgiving. When we take care of our obligation to forgive, then God keeps the channel of His own blessed forgiveness flowing. Similarly, 1 John 1:9 says that as we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and keep on cleansing us...but only when we forgive others. Otherwise, if we don't forgive, a wall is put up between us and our Father. Oswald Sanders said, "Jesus....deals with us as we deal with others. He measures us by the yardstick we use on others. The prayer is not 'Forgive us because we forgive others,' but 'Forgive us even as we have forgiven others.'" Forgiveness, then, is basic to being forgiven. e. The Product Experienced What is the effect of us forgiving others? Simply that God forgives us, which means that we can experience the fullness of fellowship and take ourselves out of the place of chastening, and into the place of blessing.

How to Convince Others That You Have Truly Forgiven Them

When someone sins and you have forgiven him in your heart and have restored him into your fellowship, I recommend that you seek to convince that person of your sincerity by giving him something of value. This will demonstrate to him that your heart is truly with him, for Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). It may be that you need to show him you trust him again by putting something you highly value into his hands, thus demonstrating a tremendous sense of forgiveness. Never say, "Well, I forgive you, but I'm not getting close to you again." Maybe the item of value you give him is yourself or your child, as you say in effect, "Last time you chewed me up and spit me out in little pieces, but I'm coming right back in again because I forgive you. The true evidence of my forgiveness is that I give you something of value because I trust you." Sometimes we hold back all of the treasures of our life from that person because we're afraid that they will repeat the same offense against us. But true forgiveness trusts and is even willing to open itself to abuse again.

Another verse that exhorts us to forgive is...

2. Matthew 5:7

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

Again we find exactly the same principle: If you want mercy from the Lord when you sin, then you had better give mercy to other people. Think of it this way. You are very like God when you forgive, aren't you? Everybody says, "I want to be godly." Well, could I suggest to you that godliness may not be memorizing a thousand verses as much as it would be forgiving someone? After all, a forgiving spirit ought to be the spiritual fruit of that memorization.

I think that this verse is a statement of fact about a believer. People in God's Kingdom are merciful, because they've experienced mercy. So, if you're not, you're actually contradicting your own nature in Christ. You have been forgiven and you've become a forgiver because you understand that forgiveness. But it's very possible as a Christian that you can get into a stretch of disobedience in your life where you fail to forgive others and then you are really violating the very proof of your salvation. If you want to be able to identify a Christian, just look for someone who knows how to forgive. True forgiveness from God breaks the person down, and gives him a heart of forgiveness toward others. If you really are a Christian who's been forgiven, then you're going to understand forgiveness. And if you don't understand it, then it is questionable whether you've ever really experienced it.

Let me take you to another passage:

3. Matthew 5:21-24

a. The Tradition of the Jews Jesus reiterated the tradition of the Jews: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not kill and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment" (v. 21). That tradition warned people not to kill, because if they did, they might get put in jail. Such an interpretation of God's law was very shallow. In their eyes, there was no moral issue involved, just an effort to make sure one didn't get thrown in jail. b. The Teaching of Jesus Clarifying the true intent of God's law, Jesus said, "But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [an untranslatable epithet of malicious verbiage], shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool [a mocking identification of one as a moron], shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (vv. 22-24). Why? Because you can't commune with God, until you've resolved an issue which demands your forgiveness. First comes reconciliation, and then the freedom to worship. First we forgive, and then we can be forgiven.

CONCLUSION

We need to examine our own lives in this area. Are you like God, having a heart that is eager to forgive? We all get wronged, directly and indirectly. Is your heart free to forgive no matter how close that wrong may be and how deeply it penetrates you? For me, as a personal testimony, the deepest pains come when people speak evil against me and want to destroy my reputation. I hear about unbelievable accusations that are supposed to be true about me. But I find that those become the test of a forgiving heart. I ask God to give me the grace to forgive, because I don't want to carry a grudge of bitterness for five seconds. Therefore, when I hear such allegations, I am quick to offer up a prayer like this: "O God, put in me the heart of forgiveness so that I may commune with You in the fullness of fellowship and joy and not experience the chastening that comes when You don't forgive me. May I remember that for everyone who sins against me I have multiplied times sinned against You...and You have always forgiven me. At no point in time has any of my sin caused me to forfeit my eternal life; therefore, no one else's sin should cause them to forfeit my love and my mercy toward them." With the same attitude, you too can seek to pursue the restoration of fellowship with those who have wronged you that you might experience the resulting joy. In doing this, you demonstrate the true heart of forgiveness by giving back to that person something of great value...yourself entrusted into their care.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What great virtue is a key to the unity of the church?
2. On what basis do Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 say that we are to forgive others?
3. What is one reason that we are indebted to Peter in this passage?
4. What did Peter probably expect Jesus' response to be to his suggestion of forgiving seven times?
5. Under what circumstances did both Jesus and Stephen forgive others in Luke 23:34 and Acts 7:60 respectively?
6. Who is primarily wronged when people sin?
7. Describe the two types of forgiveness. How are they both applied by one Christian to another?
8. Why did Peter think that forgiving a person seven times would be a generous limit?
9. Do you think Jesus' answer was meant to be taken literally? Why? Summarize the principle Jesus gave Peter about forgiving others.
10. What act is the forgiveness we receive based upon?
11. In what sense can a Christian have unforgiven sins?
12. What will you not be able to experience if you fail to forgive someone else? On the other hand, what will you experience? Why?
13. How do the tenses of the Greek verbs in Matthew 6:12 instruct us to put our forgiving before God's?
14. When is a wall put up between us and God?
15. How can giving someone something of value demonstrate that you have truly forgiven him or her?
16. Why should people in God's Kingdom be merciful?
17. Why was the tradition of the Jews shallow with regard to the command not to kill?
18. What does Matthew 5:22-24 tell us we must do before we can commune with God?

Pondering the Principles

1. If you have never memorized a verse on forgiveness, take time to commit Colossians 3:13 to memory now.
2. Think through all the trials that Joseph faced which resulted directly or indirectly because of his brothers' jealousy: thrown in a pit to die, separated from his family, sold as a slave, serving a two-year prison sentence. If your family had similarly conspired against you, would you have been willing to forgive them like Joseph did in Genesis 50:20-21? What in those verses shows that he had truly forgiven them? What did he see from the divine standpoint that gave him the capacity to forgive? Consider any personal situations in which you are bitter toward others. Do you believe that God can superintend the issue which caused the bitterness and sovereignly work it for the good of all involved? Are you willing to trust God to help you resolve a situation that looks hopeless? Go to the person involved and ask his or her forgiveness, even if you think that you were not responsible for the conflict. Finally, decide how you will convince the person that you truly forgive him or her.
3. Reread the comments under The Priority Exhorted on page 9. Which of those statements, if any, apply to you? If there are some, think back and try to remember if deep down inside you are still holding a grudge that was never dealt with and may have long since been suppressed. Make a commitment to restore the joy in that relationship and with God by forgiving that individual.

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