

March/April 2011

ARE YOU IN NEED OF A NEW BEGINNING?

I'm old enough to remember when "Easter" used to be called "Resurrection Day". When prayer was removed from schools and as the United States became more and more secular the word resurrection became obsolete except in churches. I always liked that word. To me it meant a new beginning or starting over. Certainly a sign of spring.

Three days before the new beginning came the ultimate sacrifice and act of forgiveness, Jesus being sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," John 3:16. This sacrifice was not only for the sins we commit; it is also for the sins that have been committed against us by others.

When you realize all that God has forgiven you, it is easier to be forgiving towards others. When I accepted Jesus as the forgiver of my sins and leader of my life as an adult I was baptized at my church. One thing we do during this ceremony is pin a list of the sins we've been forgiven for on a large

cross before we go into the water. In the act of baptism, the water was so cleansing to me. I truly felt washed clean.

I became aware of my unforgiveness toward others as I was hearing more and more messages on forgiveness. I either heard them on Christian radio or at my church. I realized that the more I kept score the more bitter I became. I knew I had to work through the anger and work toward forgiveness.

The resources that helped me to process the past hurts in my life and gave me steps toward forgiving were: "The Art of Forgiving" by Lewis Smedes, "Bold Love" and the chapter of the same name in "The Wounded Heart", both by Dan Allender.

At the end of this process it was impressed on me by the Holy Spirit to pray for the salvation of those who wounded me in the past. Not so much for them, but for what it did to soften my heart. Some of the people I will



never encounter again, they were not family members, so I know it was not for their benefit as much as it was for mine. This process softened my heart and made me a more forgiving person.

The following is a partial list from Lewis Smedes' "The Art of Forgiving", telling what forgiveness is and isn't:

We cannot forgive a wrong unless we first blame the person who wronged us.

* Forgiving is a journey; the deeper the wound, the longer the journey.

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- * Forgiving does not require us to reunite with the person who broke our trust.
- * Forgivers are not doormats; to forgive a person is not a signal that we are willing to put up with what he/she does.
- * Forgiving is essential; talking about it is optional.
- * Waiting for someone to repent before we forgive is to surrender our future to the person who wronged us.
- * When we forgive, we set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner we set free is us.

The question to you as we approach Resurrection Day this year is, do you need a new beginning or do you need to give one to someone else? Are you willing to work through the issues to get to the place where you can forgive?

In the bullet points previously listed it says you need to “blame” the person for what they have done to you. You may need to make a list and write, “I forgive _____ for _____.” After you are finished with the list, pray and release those people to God and either tear the list up or shred it.

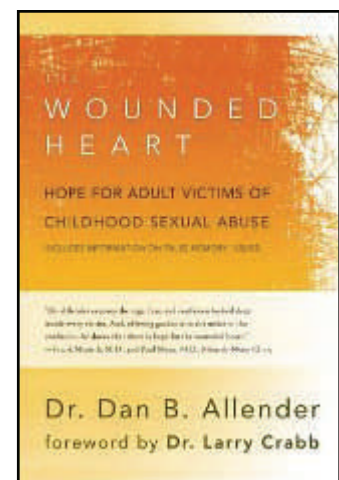
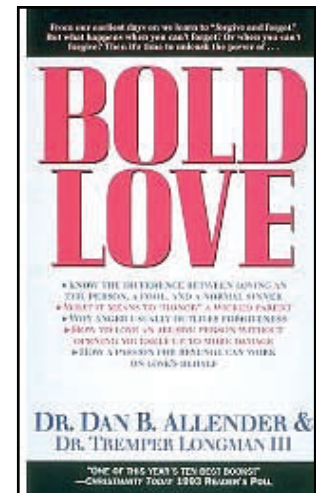
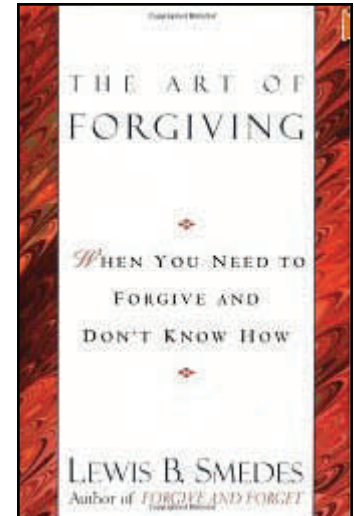
If you need forgiveness from the Lord you may try a process such as: “I have done _____ to _____ and I ask for your forgiveness based on what Christ did for me on the cross”. Again when you are finished tear up the list or shred it.

Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.” If the Lord no longer holds your sins against you, neither should you. You may then need to go directly to the person and ask for their forgiveness.

People say we should “forgive and forget”, I propose instead we should “forgive and let go.” If we continue to hang on to bitterness have we really forgiven? Who are we really hurting, ourselves or other people? I pray you come to this Resurrection Day less burdened by the things you have done to others and things others have done to you.

By Karen Ferguson

*Scripture references:
New International Version*



Can Abuser's be Redeemed?

When I think about Bold Love, it is about more than forgiveness, it's about helping someone to be restored to the life that God originally planned for them. It's also about steps toward reconciliation, if possible.

In the Bold Love chapter in *The Wounded Heart* workbook, Dan Allender poses this question: Which of the following would you choose?

- That God would totally destroy your abuser(s) so that not a molecule of his being continued to exist.
- That God would totally restore him to be the person God designed him to be.

I want to give you a picture of what an abuser restored to Christ would look like.

I have a friend who is an alcoholic; he's been sober for over 20 years. I first met him in 1996 at a church retreat for support group leaders we sat at a table with seven other leaders. He was open about being in recovery attending AA and SA groups. The following year after I started a sexual abuse support group he told me another part of his story.

He told me he had been in prison for sexually abusing his son. For years he had blanked that part of his life out through his alcohol

abuse. He said that while drunk he would molest his son. Through counseling he recovered these memories as well as memories of being sexually abused as a child. Upon these discoveries he realized he had two choices:

1. Not to disclose abusing his son to his therapist using the excuse he had been drunk and didn't know what he was doing, and that he too had been abused; both of these reasons would keep him a victim.

OR

2. Confess his discovery to his therapist knowing that he would be reported to the police and face trial and prison.

He chose the later due to the fact that during his AA process he had committed his life to Christ and has the desire to follow Him for the rest of his life.

He brought his son to a therapy session, confessed what he had done and told the therapist, "Report me and I will accept whatever consequences come." He also told his therapist he would make provisions to pay for therapy for his son while he was in prison.

He spent 2-1/2 years in prison and then was on probation for 2 years. You have probably heard that sex offenders are not treated well by other prisoners. He told me God



had really protected him while he was in prison. He led a Bible study group in prison and when I later met his prison chaplain he told me he was his right-hand man.

The restoration of the relationship with his son didn't come until years later. At the time of the confession his son wasn't ready to face what had happened between them. It took many years for him to contact his dad to restore a relationship with him.

This is an example of what can happen when God gets a hold of an abuser. So I ask you, even if you are not yet at that place where you can forgive, would you at least agree to pray for the salvation for your abuser(s) knowing that God could totally transform them into the person He wants them to be?

By Karen Ferguson

Adapted from the Bold Love chapter in Dan Allender's *The Wounded Heart*

The Root and Offspring

In the book, *Woman Submit: Christians and Domestic Violence*, Jocelyn Anderson writes, “The battered woman becomes very vulnerable to anger and bitterness...”

The truth is we don’t have to be victims of domestic violence to battle bitterness. We all are vulnerable to this permeating and destructive root.

Hebrews 12:5 says, “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

The Bible not only references trees numerous times, but it even uses trees as a reference to us. Mark 8:24 says, “He looked up and said, ‘I see people; they look like trees walking around.’”

As a living tree, we determine what seeds will root within us. We will either produce good fruit or bad fruit based on the condition of our hearts. Unfortunately, because we live in a sinful world, we will daily struggle with seeds of hurtful offenses and the opportunity for bitterness to take root. We must guard our hearts for it is the well spring of life (Proverbs 4:21).

We are to be like trees planted by streams of Christ’s living water so that we will yield fruits of healing (Psalm 1:3; Revelation 22:2). Furthermore, Christ’s Holy Spirit offers nourishing liv-

ing water to those who are thirsty (Isaiah 55; Revelation 22:17).

John 7:37-39 says: ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

When we are thirsty or hungry for the Lord, His transforming healing Holy Spirit can turn the bitterness into His sweetness (Proverbs 7:27).

Furthermore, Ephesians 4: 30-32 instructs us to not grieve the Holy Spirit but to purge all bitterness and the fruits it produces.

Tragically, the bitter root seeks to shackle our hearts, with the premise of rattling judgment and condemnation upon others; however, it ultimately shackles and rattles *us* with condemnation and judgment!

Interestingly enough, scripture begins by allowing mankind to freely choose trust and obedience when presented with the tree of life. Similarly, we are free to choose trust and obedience when presented with the tree of eternal life.

By allowing the root of bitterness to defile us, it mocks Christ’s ultimate act of love and forgiveness (Hebrews 10:26-31). By failing to forgive others and even ourselves,

we are essentially saying your grace is not sufficient! By neglecting to forgive, scripture teaches that we rob ourselves of Christ’s holiness and saving grace (Hebrews 12:12-15).

Ultimately, the choice is ours. Will we allow the root of bitterness to produce bad fruit or will we allow the root of forgiveness to produce good fruit? Our choice is a consequential and eternal matter of the heart (Luke 6:42-25).

Choose wisely who you will serve (Joshua 24:14-15) for “the ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Luke 3:9)

Jesus Christ, is the Root and Offspring (Revelation 22:16). *Who or what is your root and offspring?*

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”
Revelation 2: 7

By C. R. Truelove



www.crtruelove.com



Scripture references:
New International Version

Scriptures on God's Pardon

Micah 7: 18-19

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Isaiah 43:25

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 44:22

I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like a morning mist. Return to me for I have redeemed you.

Psalm 103:8-12

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 32:1

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Isaiah 1:18

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Col. 1:13-14

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.

Eph. 1: 7-8

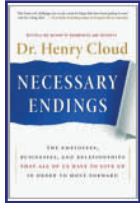
In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Romans 8:1,2

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

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Book Review



Necessary Endings

By Dr. Henry Cloud



Normalizing necessary endings keeps us from being taken off guard when an ending to relationships and situations occur. Identifying the difference between hope and wish safeguards us from feeling stuck and trapped in something that needs to end. Realistically evaluating individuals in our lives assists us in our decision making.

This book gives us the tools to prune those things that keep us from being all that God intends us to be.

Psalm 23

A Sunday school teacher asked her class if anyone could quote the entire 23rd Psalm.

A golden-haired, four-and-a-half-year-old girl was among those who raised their hands.

A bit skeptical, the teacher asked if she could really quote the entire psalm.

The little girl came to the front of the room, faced the class, made a perky little bow, and said, "The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want."

She bowed again and went and sat down.

That may well be the greatest interpretation of the 23rd Psalm ever heard.

--author unknown

The Other Pro-life Movement

Domestic Violence Training for Churches/Groups/Organizations

Topics:

- What is Domestic Violence?—A Closer Look at Verbal, Emotional, Sexual, Physical, and Spiritual Abuse
- Characteristics of an Abuser/Why Does He Do That?
- Recognizing a Victim of Domestic Violence
- Why Women Stay or Leave/Developing a Safety Plan
- How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Family Especially Children
- Teen Dating Violence
- What Can the Church Do?
- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling
- Signs that the Abuser Has Changed
- Church Safety Plan/Risks
- Becoming an Anchor in the Storm/How to Help Someone in an Abusive Relationship

Development of Domestic Violence Program in Churches

- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling Victims and Abusers
- Development of Domestic Violence Policies and Procedures for Churches
- Step By Step Approach for Churches to Address the Issue of Domestic Violence
- Training for support group leaders

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **Wal-Mart gift cards** to meet the physical needs of women and children
- **New board members** that share the vision of FOCUS Ministries
- **Part time** development coordinator, administrative assistant,
- **Part time** teen program coordinator
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **Development of a Bible study**
- **Development of webinars**
- **Women** who are coming to the support groups who are growing, learning, and making the necessary changes

Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for a facility** for our FOCUS Women's Center. It would enable us to expand our services and provide more

trainings, seminars, and conferences.

- **Pray for funds** to hire much needed staff
- **Pray for board members** to serve on the FOCUS board
- **Pray for women and families** who contact our FOCUS Women's Center.
- **Pray for pastors' wives** that are being abused.
- **Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses** to commit to **monthly giving**.

- Pray for all the **FOCUS support group leaders** in the U.S
- Pray for **houses** in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for more **invitations** from churches to train pastors, staff, and congregations about domestic violence.



Upcoming Events

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The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at www.focusministries1.org.** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

FOCUS Ministries (and all individuals affiliated therewith) disclaims any personal liability for information presented within this newsletter or in seminars, workshops, and support group meetings. You should always consult a professional for medical, psychological, legal, financial, or biblical advice.

- **March 15, 2011 — Fun Night/ fundraiser** at Mimi's Café in Naperville, IL
- **March 25-26, 2011— Train the Trainer** (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **April 30, 2011— Your Order of Protection**, Emmanuel Bible Church, Berwyn, IL
- **May 14, 2011— Extraordinary You-2, Extreme Makeover**, Orland Park, IL
- **Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2011— Exhibitor** at AACC World Conference, Nashville, TN

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars, DV training or other speaking engagements.

contactus@focusministries1.org

O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



Go to GoodSearch.com. Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and search. The search engine is powered by Yahoo! and each time you search, designate FOCUS Ministries as your charity, verify and search. GoodSearch will then make a donation to FOCUS.



Go to GoodShop.com. Enter FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity in the box provided, verify and browse the online mall.. Choose from over 500 popular online merchants from Best Buy to Wal Mart. A portion of your online purchase will be donated to FOCUS Ministries and the shopping experience through GoodShop is exactly the same as going to the online retailer's websites directly.



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