

Learn how to resolve your  
anger and walk in forgiveness

part of the



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# *Overcoming* **Anger and Resentment**



**UCB** UNITED  
CHRISTIAN  
BROADCASTERS



## Index of abbreviations

All scripture references are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

AMP Amplified Bible • NIV New International Version • NAS New American Standard

NKJ New King James Version • NCV New Century Version • TM The Message • TLB The Living Bible

NRS New Revised Standard Version • PHPS Phillips N.T. in Modern English

• GWT God's Word Translation • TEV Today's English Version • NEB New English Bible

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# Welcome to Overcoming Anger and Resentment

We have a God to help us in our anger and to lead us out of it

If you have ever struggled with feelings of anger, breathe a sigh of relief – you're normal! There's nothing new about anger. Anger is a part of our world, part of what makes us human and, most significantly, a *gift* from our Creator God. Despite society's negative view on anger and our own uncertainty about it, feeling angry is *not* a sin. Anger itself is not evil. It is a fact of life – and we are not alone in dealing with it.

From the very first pages of scripture, it is clear that God delights in you. Lovingly breathed into life from mere dust (Genesis 2:7), your body reflects the image of your glorious Creator inside and out (Genesis 1:27). Emotions, including anger, weren't a by-product of design that took God by surprise – they were always part of your blueprint. God laced you with the ability to think and feel for a reason, giving each of your emotions an important role. The gift of anger gives a voice to our pain, it draws attention to our hurts, urges us to right wrongs and provides us with the energy and motivation to make changes in our lives and the lives of others. But with this great gift comes great responsibility.

Thankfully, the Bible is far from silent about anger. In the book of Jonah alone we encounter righteous anger (ch. 1:2), angry weather (ch. 1:4) and angry men (ch. 1:8), but we are left with the undeniable evidence that the God longing to journey with us is Himself slow to anger and full of love (ch. 4:2). Thank goodness our God knows us better even than we know ourselves!

We have a God to help us *in* our anger and to lead us *out* of our anger. In Him we have the victory, and whatever challenges of anger and resentment that you may be facing today, be assured that they *can* be overcome.

**The Overcoming Series is designed to help people like you find God's help in dealing with the challenges that face us all.**

Contained in these little booklets are big truths from God's Word, guidance on how to pray, and practical suggestions for change. Turn over to begin reading a selection of articles and testimonies written by people who understand what you're going through and long to help you overcome. Then, starting on page 16, there are 28 readings from Bob Gass, author of *The Word For Today*, to help you practice new thought patterns and habits day by day for a month. As the Bible says, 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4). With the help of our great God, you can overcome any challenge you face.



Discover the other titles in the Overcoming Series on page 35

# Anger and Resentment -

## Where do I start?

If we're not careful, 'anger' can quickly spell 'danger'

Our aim should be to resolve our anger, experience restoration and walk in forgiveness

**A** recent UK survey revealed that **64% of us** feel that people in general **are getting angrier**. However, **58%** of those surveyed felt that they **would not know where to go** if they needed help with anger that had become a problem\*. Whether it's anger at injustice, a case of road rage or a shop-floor scramble on the first day of the sales, where did it all begin – and where do we start?

It all begins with righteous anger – the perfect and holy anger that belongs to God. This is anger in its utmost positive form and right expression. We read about it in the Bible and we see its reflection on earth – as anger against injustice and oppression. But when sin entered the world, things got messy and now all too often we are acutely aware that *'the anger of man cannot achieve the righteousness of God'* (James 1:19–20).

If we're not careful, 'anger' can quickly spell 'danger' and this means we have a responsibility to ensure that it is handled safely. **Anger can kill physically, mentally, and spiritually in its negative forms.** It can cause us to sin. We all experience anger, but as part of the package we have choices to make about what we do with these feelings which will affect both our lives and those around us. The enemy seeks to divide our hearts, minds and relationships and it's up to us to decide whether we will allow it to do so.

Feelings of anger are always triggered by something. Generally we get angry either with people or things, and usually the latter is easier for us to deal with, gain perspective on and cast aside. However, when it comes to anger involving relationships, things can be much more complicated and everybody will handle anger differently, depending on their past experiences and the things that they value and believe. But whatever the situation, our aim should be to resolve our anger, experience restoration and learn to walk in forgiveness.

When we decide to move forward *in* and *out* of our anger it is a journey. But **don't be afraid** or reluctant to set out! The majority of the Bible is written about the journey, rather than the destination. Draw near to Him now just as you are – don't wait until you are as you think you should be.

*Over the next few pages, follow five helpful steps, based on Psalm 139, to encourage you to look to God for help with your anger and resentment. Explore them one by one either alone or with a friend, and bring everything before God who is always near, desiring honesty in His relationship with you.*

\*The Mental Health Foundation Survey by YouGov: 'Boiling Point' January 2008 <http://www.angermanage.co.uk/pdfs/boilingpoint.pdf>

# Step by step

Your guide to overcoming anger and resentment with God's help

## 1. Investigate my soul (Psalm 139:1–6)

### Where's the fire?

**W**hen they arrive on the scene, fire fighters first acknowledge and assess the blaze in front of them before approaching it. In the same way, when it comes to anger and resentment we should begin by acknowledging the situation we are in and assessing our thoughts and feelings.

We need to bring ourselves before God and ask Him to help us investigate our lives because 'The LORD doesn't see

things the way you see them... the LORD looks at the heart' (Samuel 16:7 NLT).

What has triggered the anger in the first place? In Genesis 4:5 the Lord says to Cain 'Why are you angry?' Exploring the answer to this question is biblical and the first and crucial step in our journey to freedom.

#### TRY...



Having a notebook handy to write down everything that comes to mind as you explore why you feel angry.

## 2. Illuminate my life (Psalm 139:7–12)

### How far has the fire spread?

In the same way that an investigator might use a heat detector to check the temperature inside a burning building and determine how far a blaze has spread, you may need a little help shedding some more light on your situation.

God is an Illuminator (Psalm 139:12). You may think you know precisely the cause of your anger or resentment immediately, but it's never a bad idea to invite God to 'create in [you] a clean heart' (Psalm 51:10) and shine His spotlight on how you are feeling.

Sometimes part of the journey is to walk out of the dark, hidden place of our

struggles and bring the situation that we are facing into the light by sharing it with another person. Remember you are not alone in any of this. We were all created to be in community and if we are honest, one of our greatest desires is to be truly known by others.

Facing our fears and pressing into our pain can seem unattractive at the time, but keeping things hidden away will often make the situation even more ugly. As you seek to bring things into the light, hold on to the promises of God! He will never leave us, He will give us the strength we need for each day and our hope is in Him.

#### TRY...



Asking God to provide another person who you can trust to share your situation with honestly.

# Practical:

'On the spot' strategies for dealing with anger

## Ten-second anger delay

At the first sign of anger, immediately engage the rational brain. Experiment to see what works for you: identify different colours around you; words beginning with the same letter; counting backwards from one hundred

in threes, etc. This buys you the ten to twelve seconds needed to subvert the otherwise imminent emotional hijack.

## Standing Back

Sometimes, we need to learn to stand back to look at the 'scene' we are part of. In other words, to avoid an explosion – DON'T light the blue touchpaper – but stand well back! To 'stand back' in a potential explosive situation, try:

### 1. The 'friend technique'

Ask: 'How would an all-knowing, all-wise friend advise me to view this situation?'

### 2. Reframing the situation

Where are the good aspects of this situation? Find five ways to look at the situation positively. (Sometimes it can help to jot down those five positive views of a long-term situation and keep them nearby, in your bag or in a safe and private place on your desk as a frequent reminder.)

### 3. Conducting a cost-benefit analysis

Become an anger accountant! Examine the costs and benefits of your current system of appraisal (costs and benefits to the situation, the people involved, your emotional tank, the stability of the current situation, future fall-out) and then look for a more 'cost-effective' way to deal with it.

### 4. Having time out to cool down

If someone else is involved in your anger, agree a time to sit down with them at a later date to talk about the issues: a time when you have both had an opportunity to think through the issues calmly and logically from all angles. Do NOT view this interim as time out to build your case!

If it's a situation that is angering you alone and you want to understand and deal with that anger, make an appointment with yourself and the anger when you have calmed down and make an effort to work through the issues. You may need a pen and paper, or a wise and patient friend who will help you to look at the details from a fresh perspective with a view to resolution – not justification!

*Taken from Wendy Bray and Chris Ledger, 'Insight into Anger', copyright CWR 2007. Used with permission.*

### 3. Influence my decisions (Psalm 139:13-16)

## Take yourself off the heat

**A** fire requires three things to burn – heat, oxygen and fuel. Remove any one of these and it will not survive. Once we have acknowledged and assessed the fires we are facing in our own lives, we too can strategically think about how to put them out. In situations when we feel that anger could spell danger we must make positive choices to remove ourselves from the situation, keeping ourselves and others safe.

God created our bodies. He 'knows us inside and out' (Psalm 139:13) so He knows exactly how we react internally to anger and how it feels. Jesus became

angry himself (Matthew 21:12). With the physiological effects of anger preparing the body for action, we often need to take physical action to help 'take ourselves off the heat' and cool down.

Deep breaths and counting to ten are not just old wives' tales – they are considered genuinely effective in physically helping our bodies to manage anger. Try it next time you feel your body in need of a 'time out'.

### 4. Inspire my mind (Psalm 139:17-22)

## Cut off the oxygen supply

**N**ext, it is important to look at whether our fire is being fed. One of the three things that we can seek to remove and put out the fire is the 'oxygen' – which might represent the lies that can be breathed on to and into an angry situation.

When we are feeling angry, the enemy enjoys fuelling the fires which can keep us in sin and from turning to trust in God. In this negative place our thoughts can add reasons to justify prolonging our anger. Feelings of bitterness and resentment can grow. Sometimes we even enlist others to join us in our cause. We fan ourselves into flames at great speed, yet even when our fires have reduced to glowing embers

sometimes we cannot resist giving them a quick prod to keep them burning – it's exhausting. So stop.

Hold your words and thoughts accountable to Christ – 'Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips' (Psalm 141:3). Do your thoughts reflect the commands and truths of the Bible? Do they speak of the character of God? We must check the things which we are saying to others and over ourselves, replacing lies with truths. Let us 'be transformed by the renewing of our minds' (Romans 12:2).

**TRY...**



Asking God for help in unpicking any negative thoughts and in replacing them with His truths.

### 5. Inhabit my heart (Psalm 139:23-24)

## Remove the fuel

**O**ften the fuel feeding our anger in its various forms is unforgiveness. Carrying unforgiveness can be so heavy and impact significantly on our lives and well-being. Hurts that are left to fester can breed resentment which has been described as 'taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.' The person who suffers most is us. God will help us in identifying unforgiveness and we can ask Him to 'cross-examine and test us' (Psalm 139:23).

In Luke 17:4, God tells us that we must forgive others. How can we truly know the love of Jesus if we hate another, or

fully receive forgiveness if we cannot give it out? We cannot see the sins of others and simply overlook our own.

It's not about forgetting the problem – it's about facing it completely. It's not saying that what has happened doesn't matter – it says that it matters hugely. It is about engaging with the effects of the situation and then choosing to let it go. The right to judge others rests with God alone (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Forgiveness is for your own sake, and your own healing.

**TRY...**



Forgiving others, as you have been forgiven.

### The 3Rs approach to handle escalating anger:

## (Relax, Reflect, Respond)

1. Take note of any trigger and stop what you are doing.
  - Am I under stress?
2. Check your body – what is it telling you?
  - Am I taking responsibility for my own behaviour?
3. Release your physical tension- physical exercise, breathing and/or relaxation exercises.
5. Don't put off expressing how you feel for long periods and withdraw into silence.
6. Write or mentally compose a new script. If someone else is involved, carefully prepare your words to open up a discussion which hopefully will lead to some resolution, or at the very least, inform the other person of your feelings.

#### Ask:

- Does this situation remind me of any other? Has an old wound been opened?
- Do I feel threatened? If so, do I perceive this rationally or am I exaggerating it?
- Am I projecting a feeling or quality into the situation which actually belongs to me?

*Taken from Wendy Bray and Chris Ledger, 'Insight into Anger', copyright CWR 2007. Used with permission.*



# from ANGER to FORGIVENESS

**MAY 26, 2001** is a date that will be with Ray and Vi Donovan for the rest of their lives. In the early hours of the morning, the couple from South London were awoken by the police at their front door. They were told one of their sons was seriously injured and they would need to leave for the hospital right away. On arrival, they discovered one of their sons, Phil, in a forensics gown with blood splattered on his face. Their younger son, Chris, was in the operating theatre in a critical state.

'Phil tried to tell us what had happened,' remembers Ray. 'He and Chris were walking along a road with a friend when they came across a large gang of youths. For no reason, one of them hit Phil, knocking him out. Chris then rushed to help his brother, but he was taken down too, kicked and stamped on until he was unconscious. The gang dispersed, leaving Phil lying on the pavement. But Chris fell into the middle of a

busy dual carriageway. He was run over by a car and dragged 40 feet down the road.'

As the couple struggled to take in what their son had just told them, a doctor entered the room with two policemen. Their eyes said it all: Chris had died. The coroner's report would later confirm it was murder, and three young men would receive lengthy sentences at the Old Bailey.

Numb with shock and grief, Ray and Vi, who had become Christians just a few years earlier, left the hospital. 'Ray turned to me in the car and said, "We're going to have to forgive those boys for what they've done"', remembers Vi. 'I was shaking with anger and rage. How could he say that? There was no way I could forgive them for what had happened – I couldn't even stand to hear the word "forgiveness".'

God gave Ray and Vi the strength they needed to face each day. They made

tough decisions: to keep trusting Him, to keep going to church, and to keep praising Him through the hardest times. He also gave them opportunities to tell their heartbreaking story, and to share about the power of forgiveness.

They began receiving invitations to take part in the Sycamore Tree Project, which brings together offenders and victims in a process known as restorative justice. Now they minister in schools, prisons and churches through their own charity, the Chris Donovan Trust. Their story has touched hundreds of lives.

'Shortly after Chris' death we had the chance to speak in a church in Devon. When we talked about forgiveness and the need to get right with others, about three-quarters of the church stood up and started asking forgiveness of other people – including the pastor! All heaven broke loose that morning. Since then, lads in prison have come up and said to us, "I'm never going to sell drugs again", or "I never recognised what I did was wrong until I met you," says Ray.

Almost exactly ten years after Chris' murder, Ray and Vi had the opportunity to meet one of their son's killers face to face.

'We sent letters to all the boys who were sentenced, telling them we forgave them for what they did,' explains Ray. 'One replied that he accepted our forgiveness, but he could never forgive himself, which we found so sad. But in July 2011, we had the chance to meet him.

Ray goes on: 'He walked in the door and I held out my hand to him. But I heard the Holy Spirit whisper in my ear that I should give him a hug. When I did, the lad whispered to me, 'Thank you.'

'I gave him a hug too,' adds Vi. 'And I felt something break off me when I did. I felt God's love for him – it felt amazing, such a feeling of freedom. Honestly, it felt like we'd won the pools.'

'We pray for the boys who murdered Chris all the time – that they can forgive themselves, and that they'll get to know the Lord. But you never get over it. It's a daily process.'

Ray and Vi have learned that God always stands ready to help: 'I remember one time I was shouting at God, "Where were you when all this happened?" The same place He was when His Son got killed. He knows what we're going through.'

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*'I FELT AS THOUGH THE ANGER GAVE ME CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION. IN ACTUAL FACT THAT WASN'T TRUE – I WAS OUT OF CONTROL. I FELT LIKE I COULD NEVER FORGIVE THEM. I DIDN'T REALISE AT THAT TIME THAT FORGIVENESS IS A CHOICE YOU HAVE TO MAKE.'*

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**You can contact Ray and Vi through the Chris Donovan Trust at [www.chrisdonovantrust.org](http://www.chrisdonovantrust.org)**



# EGYPT: LOVE *that* OVERCOMES

IN THE MIDDLE OF CHAOS AND CARNAGE, ONE PRIEST EMBODIED THE SPIRIT OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

BY NINA KELLY, Open Doors UK & Ireland

**FOR CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT,** the 2011 revolution was a perilous time. Church buildings were attacked, homes were ransacked and burned. Christians were murdered.

By the autumn, Egyptian Christians could stay quiet no longer. On October 9, they planned a peaceful demonstration with full permission from the authorities. Tens of thousands marched on Maspero Square, to the Cairo headquarters of Egypt's state-owned media.

As they walked, the demonstrators were attacked by groups of men with knives, metal poles and construction timber. Suddenly gunfire filled the air, wounding

hundreds and killing at least five. And then, military vehicles drove straight into the protesters, ramming them, crushing them under their wheels. Some 27 protesters died in the attack. Five appeared to have been shot by snipers on the roofs. Eleven were crushed to death beneath the wheels of the attacking vehicles.

Egyptian Christian Samir recalls his experience: 'I looked back and saw the vehicles coming from behind us.... When I was running with all my strength, I found the armoured vehicle moving in a zigzag. As I ran this way, I felt it was coming this way, too. So I ran in the other direction. I ran with all my strength to get away from it. There were cars parked, there were a lot of people behind

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*SEEING WHAT THEIR PASTOR WAS DOING TO PROTECT THE 'KILLER' SOLDIER, THE MOB AGREED TO SPARE HIM IN JESUS' NAME. THE PRIEST BROUGHT THE SOLDIER TO HIS COMMANDER AND TOLD HIM, 'CHRIST DIED FOR YOU, AND HE HAS GIVEN YOUR LIFE BACK TO YOU. HE ALONE CAN SAVE YOU.'*

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me. I was not alone. I jumped between the cars but it hit the man directly behind me and threw him down.'

In the middle of the chaos and the carnage, one priest embodied the spirit of love and forgiveness which has been a hallmark of many Egyptian Christians through the country's troubles.

One of the army vehicles which had killed many people was turned on its side and had caught fire, with a young soldier still inside. The priest promised the soldier that if he came out, he would protect him from the angry mob. Asking the crowd not to hit him, he put his arms around the soldier's head and covered the young man with his body as he laid him on the ground.

The priest also prayed with those who were fatally injured, describing later how impressed he was that many of the young people around him were willing to die for Christ.

In the aftermath of the massacre, the leader of the Orthodox church in Egypt issued a

country-wide call for three days of fasting and prayer. A month later, in November, tens of thousands of Egyptian Christians from across denominations prayed through the night in Cairo. There was neither promotion or media coverage of the event, but it became the largest Christian event in Egypt for more than a millennium. Held in Mokattam, Cairo's largest 'garbage city', an Egyptian Christian leader commented on the significance of the event as the beginning of a revival.

The call for Christians to forgive is hard, particularly in the aftermath of the deliberate murder of loved ones or the systematic discrimination of friends and family. But the Christians in Egypt are learning to put God's love into practice. As a Cairo pastor said, 'Our prayers are against any plot against the peace of our country, the safety of our churches and Christian families and individuals. We want Jesus to be glorified in all situations and that the church would maintain its calling as salt and light.'

Find out more about Open Doors' work to mobilise Christians to pray for the suffering church at [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)



Do **you** need  
someone to  
**pray** with?

Call **UCB Prayerline**  
on **0845 456 7729** (UK)\*  
**1890 940 300** (ROI)\*

Or visit **ucb.co.uk/prayer**

All calls treated confidentially by trained volunteers  
\*(local rate call)

**UCBPRAYER**

## More help

### More help with Anger and Resentment

#### Advice and Guidance

As you explore the roots of your anger and resentment, you might uncover underlying issues which require specialist help to work through.

Many people find it helpful to speak to someone about their situation and counselling can be a very effective way of moving forward.

Counselling help can be found through your GP or local health service. Christian counsellors can often be found through your church leader or the Association of Christian Counsellors (see below).

#### Useful Contacts

##### **Association of Christian Counsellors**

ACC describe Counselling as 'a carefully arranged opportunity for people to talk through issues that are affecting their life, with someone trained to help.' They can be reached at [www.acc-uk.org](http://www.acc-uk.org)

##### **NHS**

For more information on the causes of anger, physical symptoms, self-help and treatment, visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/anger-management](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/anger-management)

##### **National Domestic Violence Helpline**

Freephone 24-hour helpline for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. 0808 2000 247

##### **Further Reading**

*Getting Anger Under Control* – Neil T Anderson and Richard Miller, Harvest House

*Insight into Anger (Waverley Abbey Insight Series)* – Wendy Bray and Chris Ledger, CWR

*Facing Your Giants* – Max Lucado, Thomas Nelson

*Disappointment With God* – Philip Yancey, Zondervan



# Your 28 Days of Change

God's spirit is in you and

'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'

It takes time to change long-standing thought patterns, habits and behaviour. We need to keep coming before God in our brokenness and asking for His help.

The rest of this Overcoming booklet is designed to help bring you before God for the next 28 days – to learn from His wisdom in His Word and to access His healing power through prayer.

Make a decision to set aside the time each day to read and respond in prayer. Don't worry if you miss a day or two, just pick up wherever you left off.

Keep a notebook and pen nearby to jot down anything that occurs to you while you read, or quotes that inspire you to think differently. Trust that God will speak to you personally about your healing over the coming weeks.

Remember, Jesus is on your side, willing you to succeed. Right now, He is praying to the Father on your behalf.

God's Spirit is in you, and 'He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).



The daily readings are written by Bob and Debby Gass, authors of *The Word For Today*, and originally appeared there first. Over a million people around the world read Bob and Debby's warm, encouraging words each day.

You can receive a quarterly copy of *The Word For Today* free of charge – see the back page for more details.

## DAY 1 Secret Anger

'Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.' Proverbs 16:32 NIV

**SECRET ANGER** is dangerous for it can 'eat away' at you, replacing kindness with animosity. You try to 'stuff it' or keep a lid on it but inevitably it explodes, surprising (and sometimes devastating) those who thought they knew you so well. It can come out in schemes, manoeuvres and outright deception. In its worst form it can turn to violence, manifesting itself in physical or sexual abuse, even murder!

The truth is, secret anger hurts most the one who carries it, for it colours your world, embittering you to everything around you. As it percolates through you, you feel less and less joy and all your experiences are filtered through the lens of resentment instead of gratitude. It can hide behind smiles and laughter, yet still be simmering towards the person you eat and

sleep with. It can take some event that happened twenty years ago, label it 'irreconcilable differences' and make it the basis for a divorce. 'What's the answer?' you ask. Two things:

1) Communication. The Prodigal Son's older brother had been angry for years but it didn't surface until his younger brother came back home (see Luke 15). The father's response to his older son's anger was, 'If only you'd told me how you felt, and what you needed, I am always here for you (v.31)'.

2) Forgiveness. Listen, '...Forgive as the Lord forgave you' (Colossians 3:13 NIV). Forgiveness doesn't just let the other person off the hook, it lets you off and allows you to enjoy life again!

### Prayer Point

Father, help me bring under control the animal of anger within me. Help me find ways to express the frustration I feel in order that I can manage the outcome of the day. Show me new ways of dealing with how I feel so I can release my frustrations before they become a rage of anger, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## DAY 2 Managing Your Anger

'Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger' Ephesians 4:26 ESV

**ANGER** is not a sin; mismanaging it is. The first thing to remember when you get mad at someone is that it means you care! You wouldn't let someone know how you feel if you didn't. You just need to learn how to express your feelings in a way that brings better results.

So, instead of yelling at your children for not doing their homework, explain to them how an education can fulfil their dreams, then help them where they're struggling. Don't constantly preach at your unsaved loved ones. Win them by attraction, not condemnation! Listen: '...and give no opportunity to the devil' (Ephesians 4:27). The first territory the enemy wants to take is your home because that's the seat of your power. Don't let him! 'But I've reason to be angry,' you say. So had Joseph. Yet

he fed those who imprisoned him and blessed those who betrayed him. In so doing, he was set free from his anger. Later, when he had two sons, he called the first Manasseh, meaning 'God has made me forget all my trouble' (Genesis 41:51 NIV).

Would Joseph have become great if he'd gone back to seek revenge? No! He fulfilled his destiny and enjoyed God's favour because he controlled his emotions. He called his second son Ephraim, meaning 'God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering' (Genesis 41:52 NIV). Your anger will subside when you start to see that, in spite of all you've been through, God has continued to bless you.

## DAY 3 I heard it on the grapevine

'...those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence'

Proverbs 11:13 NLT

**INFORMATION IS POWER!** We trade with it to get what we want and in the process: a) people who trust us get hurt and never trust anybody again and that's sad, because we may have robbed them of the one thing they need most – a safe place to open up and be made whole; b) the world looks on as we do this under the guise of 'I'm just sharing this with you so you can pray about it,' and loses respect for us, because in their secret societies and self-help groups they actually live by the principle, 'What's said in this room, stays in this room.' If somebody will betray to you another's confidence, do you really think they'll treat you any differently? Wise up! We're allowing relationships that were meant to bring out

the best in us to degenerate into grapevines.

Did you hear about the three friends who were sharing their weaknesses? The first one said, 'My problem's drinking.' The second said, 'My problem's lust.' After a long silence the third said, 'My problem's gossip, and I can't wait to get out of here and talk about you guys!'

Ask yourself today, 'Am I trustworthy, or is my need to impress others so great that I'm willing to betray a confidence to do it?' Before you answer, take a moment and reread these words: '...someone of integrity won't violate a confidence' (Proverbs 11:13 TM). They simply won't!

### Prayer Point

Lord, I repent of the times I have used information given to me in confidence to gossip to my friends. Forgive me, Lord, for the pain this might have caused the person who confided in me. I pray today, Father, that none of this will result in my being angry, if I have been the cause of the pain. Amen.

## DAY 4 Refuse to stay angry

'...anger resides in the lap of fools'

Ecclesiastes 7:9 NIV

**ONE DAY** an eagle swooped down and caught up a weasel. As the big bird flew away, its wings suddenly went limp and it dropped to the ground like a brick. With just one blow the tiny weasel had struck the eagle's heart and killed it. Bitterness will do the same thing to you. We all get angry at times but Solomon says only a fool allows anger to move in and take up residence.

Max Lucado writes: 'Hatred begins like the crack in my windshield. Thanks to a speeding truck on a gravel road, my window was chipped. With time, the nick became a crack, and the crack a winding tributary. Now I can't drive my car without thinking about the idiot who drove too fast. Though I've never seen him, I could describe him. He's a dead-beat who probably cheats on

his wife, drives with a six-pack of beer on his seat, and keeps his television volume so loud that the neighbours can't sleep.'

Blind rage will sour your outlook. It'll break your back, not to mention your spirit. You'll buckle under the weight of it. The mountain before you is steep enough without carrying that load. Drop it! You'll never be called upon to give more grace than God has already given you.

Want to set yourself free today? Pray, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). Want to please God? Listen: 'If you suffer for doing good, and you endure it, this is commendable before God' (1 Peter 2:20).

## DAY 5 The high cost of revenge

'...do not avenge yourselves...'

Romans 12:19 NKJ

**CHUCK SWINDOLL** tells the story of a lady whose doctor said to her, 'You've got rabies.' Immediately she pulled out a pad and pencil and began writing. Thinking she was making out her will the doctor said, 'No, no, this doesn't mean you're going to die. There's a cure.' 'I know that,' she said, 'I'm making a list of the people I'm going to bite!'

Revenge is like rabies – sometimes it devastates the one who gets hurt but it always destroys the one who does the hurting. It's insidious because: a) it convinces you that it's justified; b) it forces you to get bogged down in bitterness and self-pity; c) it makes you spit in a well you may someday have to drink from; d) it sidetracks you; or e) it causes you to take the low road.

Listen: Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "'I'll do the judging,'" says God. "I'll take care of it;" (Romans 12:19 TM). You're not qualified to judge because: a) you don't really know what's in somebody else's heart, causing them to do the things they do; b) you're setting the standard by which you yourself will be judged. Listen: 'For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.' (Matthew 7:2 NAS). Can you live with that? If you've been hurt, forgive! Then, for your own good, put it into God's hands. He's the only One who is qualified to handle it and He will, if you let Him!

### Prayer Point

Lord, help me identify revenge when it works in my life. I pray this so that I could know more of what grace is and operate in the grace, whenever revenge says it wants to come out to play. Help me forgive when revenge says 'attack.' Let me become a person with the outlook of Your Kingdom, that I may always think the best and not the worst of a person, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## DAY 6 The power of forgiveness

'Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right'

Matthew 5:25 TM

**LOOK OUT**, that chip on your shoulder could be heavier than you think! The evidence that anger kills is growing every day. Doctor Redford Williams says that the stress hormone cortisol, which fuels anger, literally tears blood vessels, causing damage to your arteries. Continuous anger prevents the healing process from taking place, so once the damage is done, a single bout of rage can trigger a fatal heart attack.

Jesus said, 'Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right. Do it now, otherwise an inevitable process starts working and continues until you have paid the last penny in pain and distress' (Matthew 5:25,26 paraphrased). Set it down before it costs you

the race! Forgive! Even if the person who wronged you never admits it or does not seem to suffer for what they've done, forgiving will set you free and enable you to move forward and that's what's important.

Never underestimate the power of forgiveness. It's the one power you always have over the person who hurt you. Abraham Lincoln said, 'The best way to destroy an enemy is make him a friend.' Forgiveness will put a spring in your spiritual step and give you a second wind for the race of life. Go ahead, forgive and see what happens!

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## DAY 7 Do what you can '...the whole body... grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work' Ephesians 4:16 NIV

**BORIS KORNFELD**, a Jewish surgeon, was imprisoned in Siberia where he treated staff and prisoners. There he met a Christian whose daily reciting of the Lord's Prayer had a profound impact on him. One day while repairing the slashed artery of a guard, he seriously considered suturing it so that the guard would die slowly of internal bleeding. His hidden anger so shocked him that he found himself praying, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us.' After that he refused to obey any inhumane or immoral prison camp rule, even though doing so could cost him his life.

One afternoon while examining a patient who'd undergone an operation, Kornfeld saw in the man's eyes such a depth of spiritual misery that he told him

his entire story, including his secret faith in Christ. That night Boris Kornfeld was murdered as he slept. But his testimony wasn't in vain. The patient who heard it became a Christian as a result. That patient was Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose writings exposed the horrors of Russian prison camps and ultimately saved the lives of multitudes.

It's a mistake to do nothing because you can only do a little. Greatness seldom seems great at the time. Usually it's just somebody seizing the moment and doing the best they can with what God's given them. What has He given you to work with today? Start using it and see what happens!

### Prayer Point

Help me, Lord, to go the extra mile for the people around me that cause me misery, even those who speak against me or just make me mad. Help me have Your love for them and may it become a lifestyle in me. Help me be a person with a smile on my face. I pray that the weight of the stress I have previously felt may melt away, in Jesus' name.

## DAY 8 Bury your resentments 'The Egyptians you see today you will never see again' Exodus 14:13 NIV

**IT'S NOT ENOUGH** to escape your past – its power over you must be broken, otherwise it will chase you for the rest of your life. When you break away from something that continually tries to recapture you, it's crucial that you get victory over it, otherwise you can't move forward.

Jesus said, 'I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy' (Luke 10:19). Today, rise up in His name and say, 'I refuse to have another relapse, another nightmare, another heartache, another bout of low self-esteem, confusion or turmoil, for "he whom the Son sets free is free indeed"' (John 8:36 paraphrased). It's terrifying to think something's over only to find it isn't. But remember it was God who permitted Pharaoh to

pursue Israel when they left Egypt. Why? '...that you may tell your children and grandchildren... how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD' (Exodus 10:1-2 NIV).

God wants you to know two things: a) the past no longer has any power over you. Listen: '...the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever' (Exodus 14:13 KJV); b) your children don't have to repeat your mistakes. The curse is lifted! They can grow up under God's blessing. God could solve the problem some other way but He takes us through the Red Sea, so that when we get to the other side we can look back and know that the battle is truly over!

## DAY 9 Healing your past

'Don't keep going over old history... I am about to do something brand-new' **Isaiah 43:18 TM**

**CREMATE YOUR PAST**, don't embalm it! Dr Harold Bloomfield writes: 'Unresolved emotional pain wreaks havoc on your immune system, cardiac function, hormone levels and other physical functions. We must make peace with our past because our life may literally depend on it!' Challenging words! Here are four suggestions for dealing with your past:

1) Reframe it. Ask yourself, 'How did it make me stronger? What do I know now that I didn't know then?' Be a learner, not a loser.

2) Break the shackles of shame. Shame isn't feeling bad over what you've done, it's feeling ashamed of who you are. It's lethal! When God created you in His image He said, 'I like it! It's very good' (Genesis

1:31 paraphrased). Start agreeing with Him!

3) Arrest the acid drip of regret. Stop punishing yourself with 'if only'. David said, '...how happy you must be, you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean' (Psalm 32:1-2 TM). Forgive yourself – God has! When He looks at you through the finished work of Calvary, you look better to Him than you do to yourself!

4) Move from grief to gain. Healing takes time so expect some anger, fear and sadness. Don't disown them – they're part of the healing process – but don't adopt them either. Know when it's time to move on – you can't walk backwards into the future. The future God has for you contains more happiness than any past you can remember.

### Prayer Point

Lord, highlight to me issues in my past which are causing problems for me in the present. Show me, Lord, how to release frustrations and hurts from the past so that I can walk into the weeks and months ahead with a fresh outlook on life. Lord, I know it's time to live life to Your full potential. Amen.

## DAY 10 Drop the blame game

'I know the plans... to give you a future and a hope' **Jeremiah 29:11 NAS**

**THREE** further suggestions for healing your past:

1) Practise acceptance. While working in the Congo as a missionary, Helen Roseveare was brutally raped. Later she said, 'I must ask myself the question, "Can I thank God for trusting me with this experience, even if He never tells me why?"' The secret of trust doesn't lie in answers, it lies in acceptance! It's knowing that in the midst of whatever has happened, is happening, or will happen, God's in control! Either you fix your mind on that and determine to laugh again or you whine your way through life complaining that you never got a fair deal.

2) Bury the past or live with its ghosts. Rehashing old hurts is like watching the same movie over and over

again, hoping for a different ending. Learn from it and move on. You don't drown by falling into the water, you drown by staying there!

3) Get out of 'the blame game'. Blame is a waste of time. When you blame yourself, you multiply your guilt, rivet yourself to the past and decrease your already low self-esteem. When you blame God, you cut yourself off from your single source of power, doubt replaces trust, and you put down roots of bitterness that make you cynical. When you blame others, you enlarge the distance between them and you, losing sight of the only option that works – forgiveness.

## DAY 11 Still feel bitter?

'If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?' **John 20:23 TM**

**LOOK OUT**, bitterness is just unfulfilled revenge. If you think what they did to you was bad, wait until you hear what bitterness will do: a) keep the hurt alive in your heart; b) control your mood; c) extend your pain; d) cause you to lose friends.

There's nothing more unattractive than a sour soul who wants to talk only about what "they" did to me'. Don't do that to yourself. You deserve better! Take back your power. Forgive 'them' and hand them over to God. And get rid of the scorecards. Burn them! If you know where they're hidden, you haven't let them go yet – you're still imprisoned.

Jesus said, 'In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get

forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others' (Matthew 6:14-15). 'But you don't know what I've been through,' you say. No, but I know what Jesus went through. Want to compare stories? Everyone He was close to let Him down. Add to that the weight of carrying the sins of the whole world and you've got more than a reason to harbour bitterness, but instead He preached forgiveness from a cross.

And His word to you today is '...pray for those who mistreat you' (Luke 6:28 NIV). It's hard to stay mad with somebody you're praying for. Another version says, '... implore God's blessing upon those who abuse you' (Luke 6:28 AMP). There it is – God's way. Try it – it works!

### Prayer Point

Lord, I am taking what the devil meant for harm and in Jesus' name I'm turning it into good. I speak to my anger and frustration and say that you will bow the knee to Jesus. Lord, help me to contain my frustration to a moment so that it doesn't pull me down for a season. I trust that You have my destiny in Your hand, Lord. Amen.

## DAY 12 The 24-hour rule

'Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you' **Luke 6:28 NKJ**

**WHEN YOU'RE CRITICISED**, it's only human to want to retaliate. But when you take time to try and understand, it makes it easier to forgive. For example, critical people often a) lack intimate relationships. They keep others at arm's length, rarely share feelings and are uncomfortable with those who do; b) lack empathy. It's easier for them to condemn than accept. Their hard and fast views make them inflexible; c) fear what they don't understand. Paul persecuted Christians because he feared their increasing popularity; d) can't handle freedom. They need rules that limit their choices and only feel secure within their own boundaries.

Abraham Lincoln's description of how he handled criticism is a literary gem: 'If I tried to answer all the

attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the best I know how and I mean to keep on doing so. If the end brings me out right, then what is said won't matter. If the end brings me out wrong, then ten angels declaring I was right would make no difference.'

So, what should you do when you're being criticised? 'Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you' (Luke 6:28). Don Shula, the Miami Dolphins American football coach, held his team to 'the 24-hour rule'. He gave them 24 hours either to celebrate a victory or sulk over a defeat, then they had to put it behind them. That's a rule you need to live by!

# DAY 13 The 'But God' factor

'But God... made us alive together with Christ'  
Ephesians 2:4–5 ESV

**ULTIMATELY**, there's nothing that can fill the emptiness of the human heart, but God. There's no solution to war, prejudice, resentment and injustice, but God. There's no satisfaction for the cravings of the flesh, but God. There's no healing for the broken-hearted, lonely and desperate, but God. There's no turning point for human depravity, but God. There's no deliverance from addiction and heartache, but God.

The 'But God' factor breaks every generational curse that reaches you through Adam's sin. One Greek translation of the word 'spirit' is 'air'. When you were 'dead in trespasses and sins', God breathed divine air into you, Paul says, 'And you [He made alive], when you were dead [slain] by [your] trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2:1 AMP).

## Prayer Point

Thank you, Lord, that I have a one-to-one relationship with You. Thank you that I have access to the Creator of the universe through prayer and thank you, Lord, that I can deepen my relationship with You and overcome the problems in my life. Help me to hear Your still small voice clearly and to walk in the power of Your Holy Spirit each day. Amen.

# DAY 14 Living in war mode!

'...I want to serve god with all my heart... but am pulled by the influence of sin' Romans 7:25 TM

**WHEN** does the battle begin? The moment your feet hit the floor! Paul writes, 'The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but... not all of me joins in that delight' (Romans 7:21 TM). What's happening? Your flesh is at war with your spirit, seducing you into relaxing your defences. And the moment you do, it'll 'nail you'. It will whisper, 'Go ahead, it's no big deal; everybody does it. Who'll know anyway?'

Learn to identify that voice before it becomes a thought entertained, a deed done, a habit formed and a character ruined. Your new birth doesn't do away with your old nature; it just brings it into sharp contrast. You may be redeemed but you still live in a carnal body. If

The truth is, you never really lived until you met the Lord. The 'But God' factor turns tragedy into triumph. It's the turning point in your story. Hell would be partying today, 'but God' chose to lavish His mercy and grace on you. Listen: '...though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV). Rich in wisdom; rich in achievements; rich in relationships; rich in 'all things'. Despite satan's efforts to destroy, diminish, defame and discourage you, God never once took His hand off your life. He brought you to an understanding of Jesus as your Saviour and Lord; now He's raising you up to fulfil His purposes. No matter how bad things may look today, rise up and declare 'But God!'

you try to fight the flesh in the power of the flesh, you'll just end up fighting yourself.

What's the answer? 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh' (Galatians 5:16 NKJ). How do you do that? By obeying God's Word instead of doing what comes naturally! If you 'blow it' occasionally, don't get discouraged. You were programmed from birth to walk in the flesh. Now you're learning to walk in the Spirit, with a new set of values, new companions, new priorities, new resources and new management. Your new birth began a new battle. If you're going to win it, learn to live in 'war mode'!

# DAY 15 What's love got to do with it?

'Love is...'  
1 Corinthians 13:4 NIV

**LOVING** when you least feel like it (and they least deserve it) is when you love like God. That kind of love can actually transform others in the same way that Christ's love transforms us (see Ephesians 5:25–27). What's love got to do with it? Everything!

Listen: 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres' (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NIV).

Based on what you've just read, evaluate the quality of your love: a) do you suffer patiently when others are

being difficult? b) are you kind, even when they are not? c) do you refuse to envy them or anything in their life? d) do you make a point of giving them the credit? e) do you refuse to treat them rudely? f) do you refuse to demand your own way? g) do you refrain from using threats or uncontrolled anger? h) do you take no pleasure when something bad happens to them? i) do you tell them the truth even when it's difficult? j) do you handle 'graciously' whatever comes? k) do you believe in them even when they don't believe in themselves? l) do you love them regardless? Well, how did you do?

## Prayer Point

Loving at your intended level, Lord, is something that is difficult for me but I'm willing to try. Even when I have a past that says I should live a life of bitterness, I'm choosing to live a life of love today. Help me understand Your love towards me that I can better express Your love to people around me, in Jesus' name. Amen.

# DAY 16 Get over it!

'...do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!' Isaiah 43:18–19

**WHEN EVE AWOKE** on planet Earth she was already a wife! Imagine waking up beside a man when you've never seen one before. It was the ultimate sink-or-swim situation. She was created without a childhood. She never experienced growing up. She stepped right into being a wife, then a mother. Did that happen to you?

A lot of us find ourselves having to be parents before we've had a chance to be children, or to get to know what it means to be innocent, to trust, to receive genuine love. If that's your story, God has a word for you: 'Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.'

Refuse to blame your past for your present or it will ruin your future. You can't go back and make things different. You're not the person now you were then and you're never going to be. You can't re-live your first marriage or your early childhood. Accept it, dismiss what used to be and move on! Often we hold on to our past because there's something there we think we still need. We cling to things because we fear we'll never be able to replace them. Don't you know that God has more for you? If you're trusting Him for your future, then you haven't seen your best days yet. There's more ahead of you than behind you. So get up, get over it and move on!

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## DAY 17 Disappointing '...until Christ is formed in you' Galatians 4:19 NIV

**IN** *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg writes: 'I'm disappointed that I still love God so little and sin so much. I'm capable of dismaying amounts of jealousy if somebody succeeds more visibly than I do. I'm disappointed at my capacity to be small and petty. I cannot pray for very long without my mind drifting into a fantasy of angry revenge over some past slight I thought I had long since forgiven, or some grandiose fantasy of achievement. I can convince people I'm busy and productive, yet waste large amounts of time watching television. Although I'm aware of how far I fall short, sometimes it doesn't even bother me. I'm disappointed at my lack of disappointment.'

Where does this disappointment come from? It comes from 'dis-appointing', or removing God from

the central role He longs to play in our lives, and appointing ourselves in His place. It's what Paul had in mind when he said he was, 'in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you' (Galatians 4:19).

One of Michelangelo's masterpieces, *The Pietà*, is a marble statue of Mary holding the body of the crucified Christ. Some years ago a fanatic took a sledgehammer and began smashing it. Although the damage was significant, Vatican craftsmen were able to restore it to near-perfect condition. Know what? God is determined to overcome the defacing of His image in us. His plan isn't to repair most of our brokenness – it's to make us 'new creatures'. Maybe that'll help you to understand why He's been at work revealing, removing and restoring certain things in your life.

### Prayer Point

Lord, help me to believe that I am a new creation; that being a believer of Jesus opens up such opportunity in my life. Help me to be confident in You. May my words speak life even over my own, that I will move away from a place where the first thing that comes out of my mouth is 'I can't' to where I say 'I can, because of Christ!' Amen.

## DAY 18 Words! Words! Words! 'The Master, God, has given me a well-taught tongue' Isaiah 50:4 TM

**YOUR WORDS** are like nitroglycerin – they can either blow up bridges or heal hearts. You can tell more about somebody by what they say about others, than by what others say about them. Never judge a person's horsepower by their exhaust smoke; ignorance is always eager to speak. Wisdom dictates that the best time to hold your tongue is when you feel as if you 'just have to say something'.

Some people speak from experience; others from experience don't speak. That's because they've learned better. Jesus said that your words actually determine your destiny. Listen: 'Your words now reflect your fate then: either you will be justified by them or you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:37 TLB). Solomon said, 'Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit – you choose' (Proverbs 18:21 TM).

Try to remember that your words have the capacity for good or evil; they either hurt or heal. If there's one place where we all need more discipline it's in 'the words department'.

Isaiah says that God '...has given me a well-taught tongue, so I know how to encourage... people. He wakes me up, opens my ears to listen as one ready to take orders... God, stays right there and helps me, so I'm not disgraced' (Isaiah 50:4-7 TM). When you don't know what to say, say nothing! Just listen, observe and let God lead you. After all, you're usually not learning while you're talking. Just for today, try to refrain from all hurtful remarks and focus only on speaking words that encourage and bless others. You'll be amazed at the results.

# DAY 19 The hurt of withheld forgiveness

'See to it that... no bitter root grows up to cause trouble' Hebrews 12:15 NIV

**BETRAYAL** is something others do to you; bitterness is something you do to yourself! Look past the hurt and you'll see that your resentment is just a roadblock to your own success. Eliminate words of bitterness from your conversation. Don't remind others of your experience, unless it's to teach and encourage them to rise above their own.

Lloyd Ogilvie says, 'The hardest time to be gentle is when we know we're right and somebody else is wrong. It's when someone has failed us, admitted it, and their destiny or happiness is in our hands. Recently, a friend hurt me in both words and actions. Each time we met, I enjoyed the leverage of being the offended one. At first, I rejected all his attempts at reconciliation because I'd already pronounced judgment on him. My

most difficult challenge now was to surrender my anger, and work through the hurt.

'Finally, the Lord said, "Lloyd, why is it so important to you who gets the credit, just so long as My work gets done?" Right then I gave up my right to be what only God could be; this man's Judge and Saviour. Immediately my heart tenderised and my attitude toward him changed.'

When you withhold forgiveness, you hurt the other person, but you hurt yourself more – much more! You lose the joy of living. It hangs over you like a cloud, affecting everything you do. But when you forgive, you release peace and restoration to the forgiven and also to yourself. So today, forgive!

## Prayer Point

Lord, help me fight the thoughts of bitterness I have. When that thought seems to naturally invade my mind, help me find the strength in You to push it away. Help me to also know that when I've pushed that thought away, it's pushed away for good. Thank you that Your forgiveness is absolute and final. Amen.

# DAY 20 Longing for forgiveness

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins' 1 John 1:9

**AN ORGANISATION** in Los Angeles operates an 'Apology Sound-Off Line'. It gives callers an opportunity to confess their sins anonymously for just the price of a phone call. At last count, about 500 callers a day were contacting them. People who've given up on organised religion, people who believe God's given up on them, people trying to find peace by saying 'I'm sorry for the things I've done.'

At some point we all need forgiveness. If that's where you are today, listen: 'If we admit our sins... He won't let us down; He'll be true to Himself. He'll forgive our sins...' (1 John 1:9 TM). Anger and guilt are anchors that keep you chained to the past and shut out any possibility for

change. God's forgiveness is what breaks that chain, ends the anger and cycle of blame, and frees you to be all He wants you to be.

'But you don't know what I've done,' you say. Listen again: 'God made Him [Jesus]... to be sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV). Whatever you are, Jesus became it. Whatever you've done, Jesus took it. When you cry, 'Father, I've sinned,' God doesn't even look at you; He looks at His crucified Son, charges your sin to His account and says, 'I forgive you.' What is it that you've been carrying around for so long? Give it to Him today; for His Word says, '...He will have mercy... He will abundantly pardon' (Isaiah 55:7 NKJ).

# DAY 21 Choosing not to remember

'I will never again remember their sins' Hebrews 8:12 NLT

**THE BIBLE** doesn't say that God is forgetful; it says He chooses not to remember your sins. And when you choose otherwise, you: a) question His forgiveness; b) declare that your standards are higher than His; c) allow the enemy to bring you into condemnation; and d) forfeit the confidence you need to receive what God has for you. When you rehearse your past failures, you not only keep them alive, you empower them. What you keep on deposit, you're more likely to withdraw and act on in your hour of weakness.

Nobody can predict when a dormant volcano will erupt, nor can you predict when an unresolved issue will rise up and come roaring out of your subconscious, turning

your words into hot coals, or your behaviour into a blaze of destruction. Only by forgiving yourself and others can you truly break the hold the past has over you. Shame is not a blessing – it's a weight Jesus carried for you on the cross. Set it down and walk away!

Listen: 'As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us' (Psalm 103:12 NIV). Anytime satan brings up your past, it's because a) he's running low on material; b) he hopes you're ignorant of the truth; or c) he fears your future. You say, 'What should I do?' Just point him to the cross, refuse to discuss it further, and keep moving forward!

## Prayer Point

Father, I choose today not to remember the sins of others that I have held against them for so many years. For those people who I have cut them off because I've been so annoyed, I ask for Your forgiveness today. I ask You to bless those that I might have things against, in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

# DAY 22 It's God's job - let Him do it!

'When He comes, He will convict the world of its sin' John 16:8 NLT

**ARE YOU TRYING** to change somebody? That's God's job, not yours! One woman writes: 'For years I tried to change my family and convict them of their sins. But the more I tried, the more they resisted me and the worse things got. Finally, I received a revelation; people can't change other people – only God can! I'd been trying to do something I didn't have the power to do. My job was just to love them, pray for them and let God change them. When I got out of His way, He did!'

God doesn't work according to your plans or timetable. Only when you accept that fact will you be free from obsessing over people. Commit them to God. Trust Him. Then ask yourself, 'If I wasn't trying to control

the outcome, what would I be doing differently? What decisions would I be making? What boundaries would I set?' Make a list of them and start doing them! When you try to play God, everybody gets hurt. You get hurt because others can't or won't do what you want. They get hurt because your love comes with strings attached. And you're not doing God any favours either, for He's well able to speak for Himself.

Listen: 'I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight...' (Isaiah 42:16 NKJ). Did you get that? Straightening people out is God's job – let Him do it!

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## DAY 23 It won't be taken away! ‘...that your fruit should remain’ John 15:16 NKJ

**THE MORNING AFTER** Jacob had been visited by God, he said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it’ (Genesis 28:16 NIV). Imagine – blessed, but unaware of it! Is that where you are today? Asking, ‘How can I be so blessed, yet feel so bland? How can things be so right, yet feel so wrong?’ The answer could be the defence you’ve built to protect yourself from being hurt again... it is stopping you from enjoying the blessings God has given you. Think about that for a moment!

Success doesn’t feel like success when you still have the taste of pain in your mouth. Others may even be jealous of your blessings, yet you don’t understand why – because you’re not aware of them. It cost you so much to get to where you are that, spiritually speaking, you’re still in shock. And shock is what causes us to shut

down and say, ‘I don’t want to feel anything anymore.’

You ask, ‘What’s the answer?’ Listen: ‘I have chosen you... [to] bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain’ (John 15:16). Note the word ‘remain.’ God is saying to you today, ‘I’m going to bless you, but it’s not going to be like any other time in the past. You don’t have to live with your hazard lights on anymore, or be afraid to trust. What I’m giving you will remain. You’re not going to lose it. You can rest in it. You can hold on to it. So lower your guard, open your heart and get ready to receive from Me!’

### Prayer Point

Lord, I pray that you teach me to be kind to the people I meet and to the friends and family around me – that I wouldn’t operate with a heart of stone but with a heart of love. That I would take every situation I come across not from a place of suspicion but of acceptance. Help me walk in love, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

## DAY 24 Walking in love ‘...walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us’ Ephesians 5:2 NIV

**WALKING IN LOVE** isn’t automatic when you become a Christian. No, your actions are still governed by your will. Without the discipline that comes from God’s Word and God’s Spirit, you’ll never grow up to be like your Heavenly Father. God is love and the more like Him you are, the more loving you’ll become towards others. It’s that simple.

If you think some people are just naturally more loving than others, think again! Love is a choice, one that costs! You can’t love others while you’re looking in the mirror or give to others while you’re still clinging to what you’ve got. Love will cost your time, your money and your preoccupation with self. If you’re waiting for the love of

God to envelop you suddenly and turn you into some sort of floating divine being who goes through life doing wonderful loving things for others, forget it! There are no pre-packaged Christians, no ‘add and stir’ formula that makes God’s love gush forth.

To be loving, you’ve got to nail your world to the cross and make others your priority. When Jesus found the woman caught in adultery, He sent her home redeemed and restored. If you’re going to be like Him, you’ve got to find people who are hurting, abused, even wrong, and minister to them until they’re healed, restored and right. That’s called ‘walking in love.’

### DO YOU NEED PRAYER?

Call UCB Prayerline on 0845 456 7729 (UK) or 1890 940 300 (ROI) or visit [ucb.co.uk](http://ucb.co.uk)



## DAY 25 Forgive and let it go!

'Forgive as the Lord forgave you'  
Colossians 3:13 NIV

**ARE YOU** refusing to forgive your child for something that isn't half as bad as some of the stuff you've done? Forgive them, or you'll never be free to enjoy the relationship God wants you to have with them.

Are you struggling with a parent who abandoned or abused you? Forgive them and release them, otherwise you'll spend all your emotional energy keeping them in the prison of your resentment. Think what that will do to you! Whatever you don't forgive, you're destined to repeat! When you harbour bitterness, it causes you to keep striking out at others and, in the process, robs you of the joy of loving and being loved. What a loss! You're tied to the past

through the umbilical cord of unforgiveness. When you forgive, you cut that cord. When you refuse to, you remain tied to a memory that can hurt you for the rest of your life. That's how issues pass from generation to generation.

Rise up today and say, 'It ends now and it ends with me!' Learn how to receive forgiveness from God and also from those you have hurt. Then, offer that same forgiveness to those who have hurt you. When you can do that, your heart will be tender, your spirit light, your mind free, your vision clear and your speech filled with kindness. What a way to live!

### Prayer Point

Lord, help me understand the difference between correction and anger. Help me understand the difference between what is healthy for children around me to learn as a life lesson and what I do that goes beyond the line of correction and causes hurt and pain. Let my words of correction be delivered in grace and love, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## DAY 26 Gracious words

'Let your speech always be gracious'  
Colossians 4:6 ESV

**LEGEND HAS IT** that the sun and the wind got into an argument one day over which was the stronger. When a traveller came down the road, they decided to settle it by seeing who could force him to take off his coat. The sun hid behind a cloud and the wind blasted him, but that just made him wrap his coat around him more tightly. Then the sun came out with its gentle caressing warmth and shone on him and he was forced to take his coat off.

Think about that! Angry words only make others withdraw, shrivel or shut down, especially if they're already insecure. Angry words just confirm people's worst fears and opinions about themselves. But gracious words help them to open up, discover what's good about themselves and motivate them to reach higher.

Every word you speak today will either lift or lower somebody! Remember that! Paul writes, 'Watch the way you talk... say only what helps, each word a gift' (Ephesians 4:29 TM).

Solomon says, '...there is healing in the words of the wise' (Proverbs 12:18 TM). People tend to reproduce the seeds we plant in them. If you keep telling them they're incapable or worthless, they'll probably fail. But if you keep praising them and pointing to what's good in them, they'll make every effort to justify your confidence. Listen again: Let your speech always be gracious... Today, try to fill all your words with grace.

## DAY 27 Heart prints

'Love suffers long and is kind... is not provoked... endures all things' 1 Corinthians 13:4,5,7 NKJ

**WHEN WILLIAM MCKINLEY** campaigned to be US President, he was hounded by an impoverished young reporter who continually attacked him. One bitterly cold night, the reporter, who didn't have a winter coat, sat shivering outside the coach that the future President was travelling in. When McKinley saw him he stopped and said, 'Here, put on my overcoat and ride inside with me.' 'But you don't know who I am,' the reporter stammered, 'I've been ripping you to pieces.' 'I know who you are, it makes no difference,' McKinley replied. 'Put on my coat and come inside where it's warm.' That's love in action!

When Jesus was teaching His disciples about going the extra mile He said, 'If anyone wants to... take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also' (Matthew 5:40

NKJ). The cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said, 'Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world, indeed that's all who ever have.' That night William McKinley touched a young man's life because 'Love suffers long and is kind...' We leave fingerprints on whatever we touch – walls, furniture, doorknobs, dishes and books. There's no escape; when we touch anything, we leave our identity on it. So today, pray, 'Lord, wherever I go, let me leave heart prints! Heart prints of understanding, love, kindness and genuine concern. May my heart touch a lonely neighbour, a runaway son or daughter, an anxious mother or ageing grandfather. And if somebody should say, "I felt your touch," may it be because they sensed Your love through me.'

### Prayer Point

Lord, help me develop a heart of love, not hate, toward the people that I feel are against me. Let me reach out to those who I find it difficult to connect with because You are enabling me. If I get hurt, I pray I keep a short account of that pain and by the evening bring it to the cross, never moving from that focus of love toward people in Jesus' name. Amen.

## DAY 28 Unforgiveness

'...confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed' James 5:16 ESV

**JESUS SAID**, 'If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift... Go and be reconciled... then come and offer your gift' (Matthew 5:23–24 NIV). It's pointless to pray for other things until you've first made things right with those you need to forgive or ask forgiveness from. But what if it's impossible to be reconciled because the person has died? You can't get a hearing, yet you're still troubled about it.

Here's a suggestion: share your feelings with somebody you trust – a spouse, a counsellor or a pastor. Be specific and completely honest. Pray with them, openly confessing your wrongs and the guilt you feel. You'll be surprised at how prayer and the

presence of an understanding, affirming friend, can provide the relief you so desperately seek.

After David had indirectly murdered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, his guilt was enormous. Adultery and hypocrisy just about wiped him out. When he could take it no more, he broke his silence and sought God's forgiveness. But Uriah wasn't around to hear his confession; he'd been dead almost a year. So the broken king called on the prophet Nathan and poured out his soul saying, 'I have sinned...' Nathan listened patiently, then said, 'The Lord has taken away your sin...' (2 Samuel 12:13 NIV). When you've hurt somebody, have the heart of a servant. Stop, make things right, and then move forward with confidence.



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