

An Overview of the upcoming book

# UNRAVELING THE MYTHS FORGIVENESS

Why Jesus never said to forgive your enemy  
and why the whole world thinks He did!

by

**JAMES SCOTT BERRY**

[www.cleartruthministries.com](http://www.cleartruthministries.com)

scottberry@cleartruthministries.com

## Introduction

According to Jesus Christ, Satan is the master liar and deceiver of the world. His expertise in trickery and cunningness has never been more evident than in his ability to con the whole Christian world into false and frustrating concepts of “forgiveness.” For centuries he has been tremendously successful in costing Christians years of wasted effort in struggling with “forgiveness” while avoiding the core issues of their relationship to God and truly loving their offenders.

For many Christians, forgiveness is a struggle which they must “work through” for many years. But, in reality, forgiveness (Greek word - *aphiemi*) is never a struggle for the true Christian. The real struggle is with trusting God and loving our enemy! A true Christian is already as forgiving as God is: ready to forgive when someone calls upon them in true remorse. ***For thou, O God, art good and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all who call upon Thee.*** (Psalm 86:5) But God does not forgive those who do not call upon Him.

By deceiving us into believing that **anger and bitterness** are caused by **retaining anger and bitterness** (our foolish and unbiblical definition of “unforgiveness”), he has successfully distracted us from the real reason that we struggle with anger and bitterness. That is; not having faith to believe that ***"God allowed the evil to happen to me."*** Releasing anger and bitterness has nothing to do with my relationship to my enemy or offender. It is through my trusting relationship with God that I can rest, be meek (Matthew 11:28-29), and have faith in His Sovereignty to use the evil to make me more Christ-like. He then can enable me to love my enemy.

In other words, the release of anger and bitterness never comes from being at peace with my offender, but with being at peace with the fact that God allowed my offender to hurt me.

By distracting us with years of struggle to “let go of bitterness” and goading us to be better and more forgiving than God (who never forgives an unrepentant enemy), Satan has kept us from kneeling humbly and accepting the grace of God, which can bless us through the evil and wickedness of others even while we lovingly hold them accountable.

By infusing us with modern, false, and stupid definitions of forgiveness, by keeping us ignorant of the Biblical and Jewish cultural practices of repentance (teshuva), by keeping us unaware of the two non-interchangeable New Testament words for forgiveness, by keeping us from evaluating the two contrasting interchanges of “forgiveness” at the cross (the Roman soldiers and the thief), by confusing us with opposite concepts of accountability and forgiveness in Matthew 18 and “seventy-times-seven,” by baffling us with forgiving trespassers that God will never forgive in the “Lord’s Prayer,” and through many other Biblical deceptions, Satan has kept us satisfied, though extremely confused and frustrated, in our complacency of living in Biblical error concerning true forgiveness. This book strives to reveal the “truth [of forgiveness] that will make you free.”

Despite the many thousands of books that have been written on the subject, millions of people still go to their graves frustrated about forgiveness. Many die angry and bitter over un-reconciled relationships. Even those who have found peace in their own hearts are often cognizant of the still aching memory of a wound or broken bond that was never healed.

At some point, every person must confront disappointment, hurt, anger and bitterness. No normal human can avoid thoughts of revenge and retaliation when evil has happened to them. But for most Christians, the unanswered and even un-asked question is: How can we truly imitate God who loves billions of people without forgiving them? And how do we explain, and exemplify in our own lives, the ***always unconditional love*** of God yet His ***always conditional forgiveness***?

This book reveals the powerful concept of differentiating between love and forgiveness as revealed in the Bible. When we understand how God ***loves unconditionally*** but always and only ***forgives conditionally***, then we can understand how to truly love others.

*When God forgives, those forgiven of sin are always unaccountable for their sin.* But love does what is best for others. *It is not best to “forgive and hold unaccountable” the rapist, pedophile, murderer, liar, deceiver, swindler, adulterer, abuser, cheater, etc., who is unrepentant of their continued sin.*

The misunderstood and unbiblical concept of “forgiving” unrepentant, egregious offenders has caused our society to dive headlong into dangerous misconceptions of God’s character. We have been led to accept evil in the name of tolerance, to teach generations to be undiscerning of wickedness, and to falsely believe that a loving God must be void of judgment, justice, and wrath.

Most importantly, *we use a definition of forgiveness Jesus never used.* Thus, we are telling people *to sin* by forgiving in ways that Jesus and Paul clearly instructed us *not to forgive.*

It is my hope that the issues researched in this book (as demonstrate below) will be found deserving of further study and exploration by many scholars, theologians, and Christian counselors.

- How to be *completely free of anger and bitterness BEFORE forgiving*, as Paul commands.
- Why Biblical forgiveness has absolutely *nothing to do with releasing anger and bitterness.*
- Why *Jesus never says to first forgive* those who sin against you but to first rebuke them.
- Why Jesus commands us to forgive sin *only if someone repents or feels indebted to us.*
- How to treat an unrepentant brother *as a heathen, as Jesus commands.*
- *Why Jesus never says* to “forgive your enemy.”
- Why Jesus offers forgiveness and Paradise to a thief *but does not offer forgiveness to the soldiers (though He prays for them) and does not invite them to Paradise.*
- Why both John the Baptist and Jesus demanded fruits of repentance before forgiveness could be offered.
- Why *Jesus commands us* to forgive by *removing* the debt (sin) from *repentant offenders* and yet *Paul commands us* to forgive by *overlooking the sin* of *unrepentant offenders.*
- How Jesus reveals and addresses both the *Basic Teshuva principles* and the *Rabbinical Teshuva principles* in Matthew 18.
- When and why it can be a *sinful and contrary to the love of God to forgive egregious offenses.*

## Part I Definitions, Myths, and Misconceptions

### Why Biblical Definitions Matter

My wife and I were sitting and talking as my two year old daughter began playing with the old-style telephone on night stand. Soon that obnoxious “off the hook noise” interrupted our conversation. I instructed my daughter to “hang-up” the phone.

She looked at me, I thought playfully, then, smiling, held the phone by her head. I repeated my instructions a little more firmly: “Hang-up the phone.”

She did not comply. She even seemed a little more defiant. Then, with words more slowly and sternly articulated, I said, “Hang-up the phone.”

Still, she did not comply. She gave me what I thought was an unquestionably defiant look. I tapped her on the leg. She began to cry as I repeated the instruction, but she continued to hold the phone, by now, far above her head. Finally, my wife said, to my horrific acknowledgement, “Honey, she is hanging-up the phone. She’s *hanging the phone up in the air!*”

It was all she knew to do. She was obeying me based on her knowledge and definition of the words “To hang up!” I was giving instructions based on the traditional concept of “hanging the phone up” on the wall, where all telephones used to be placed. My dear daughter had given me, not a defiant look, only a confused look.

To instruct her correctly, I could have simply said, “Put the phone down.” She would have easily and quickly obeyed. But instead,

- I unintentionally communicated a false concept to my daughter (hang up the phone)
- I wrongfully accused her (by assuming she was willfully disobedient when she was only confused)
- I falsely blamed her (for failure to follow my “clear” instructions)
- I unjustly punished her (by becoming angry or frustrated with her)

and all because of a wrong definition of the desired action.

### Re-victimizing God’s abused children

Just as I did to my daughter, but with more profoundly devastating results, ministers, counselors, theologians, and therapists have re-victimized the victims blaming them for such nonsense as being “unforgiving.”

- *We have unintentionally communicated a false (and actually stupid) definition of forgiveness to those who have already been hurt and abused.*
- *We have wrongly accused them of “unforgiveness” (which is absurd).*
- *We have unfairly blamed them for their struggles and frustration,*
- *We have unjustly punished them with guilt and condemnation,*

and all because of a wrong definition of the desired action.

## What's wrong with our concept of Forgiveness?

When asking about how to "forgive," what most people really want to know is how to overcome anger and bitterness. The biggest problem we face is that we have *a modern definition of forgiveness which we impose on an ancient culture and on Biblical text, changing the paradigm of Jesus' teaching about forgiveness.*

Today, we use a definition of forgiveness that was completely foreign to Jesus. *We define at least one aspect of forgiveness as "to not hold resentment, anger, bitterness, or a grudge against an offender."* This is a wonderful concept, **but it is never a definition of forgiveness in the Bible.** It is, however, the definition of *Biblical meekness*. Using the biblical definition of meekness as an unbiblical concept of forgiveness has confused the whole world.

Imagine a world where everyone was forgiven, whether they repented or not. A husband could beat his wife and never have to be held accountable. An arrogant teen or grown man could rape and murder and be forgiven every time. A wife or husband could commit adultery and never have to repent to be accepted. An adult could abuse a child without fear of retaliation. A dictator could torture and kill knowing all he did would be forgiven.

There are many individuals and churches that actually teach concepts similar to this. Of course, they must then qualify their teaching and redefine Biblical forgiveness by saying confusing things like: *"Just because we forgive doesn't mean they are not accountable," or, "Forgiveness does not mean we let them off the hook," or, "To forgive someone does not mean they are no longer guilty," or "Forgiving someone does not mean we have to be reconciled with them."*

But by **whose definition?** All these things are *exactly what Biblical forgiveness does mean!* The slate is wiped clean. We are justified as if we never sinned. We stand righteous and Holy, no longer accountable for our debt and sin. Whenever God forgives someone's sin, they are reconciled to God. **There is never an exception in the Bible!**

## The Biblical Definitions of Forgiveness

Using Young's or Strong's Concordance of the Bible, we can see clearly the literal translations of the various words for "forgive." "To Forgive" actually means *to lift off (remove), send off or away, forsake, leave behind, or divorce.*

Suppose someone hurts you. They become truly repentant and are filled with remorse. They feel bound by chains and handcuffs of their sin and guilt. One day, they come to you say, "Please forgive my handcuffs of sin."

To "forgive the handcuffs of sin" may sound very strange to our ears. But the strangeness is not because of the handcuffs, it is because of our modern, misunderstood definitions of "forgive." What happens if we use the Biblical definitions of "forgive?" *"Please REMOVE my handcuffs of sin," or "Please SEND AWAY my handcuffs of sin."* Then the definition of Biblical forgiveness becomes clear. No confusion necessary!

## 7 Reasons we teach the opposite of what Jesus taught regarding forgiveness

Jesus never said to forgive your enemy, but we believe He said this because:

1. *We are not taught the Bible words/definitions of "forgive" (lift off, remove, send away, forsake, divorce)*
2. *We use a modern definition of forgiveness that Jesus did not use (to let go or release ourselves of anger and bitterness).*
3. *We do not realize that this definition of forgiveness (to let go or release ourselves of anger and bitterness) is the Biblical definition of meekness.*
4. *We do not know the differences between the two main Greek words for "forgive" in the New Testament: Aphiemi (to remove an offense) and Charizomai (to overlook an offense). (Aphiemi/removing is for egregious sins and requires repentance and the Charizomai/overlooking is for non-egregious sins and does not require repentance.)*
5. *We do not know that the Greek text makes clear that God never forgives people, but He forgives (removes, lifts away) sin FROM people. We are never the direct object of God's forgiveness; it is our sin – the sin that we desire for Him to remove or send away from us. We are not forgiven, we are saved. Our sins are not saved, they forgiven. They are sent away!*
6. *We do not know the Biblical ways to overcome anger and bitterness before and without forgiveness.*
7. *We do not know how to articulate and explain the many differences between God's love and God's forgiveness. We have caused great confusion by teaching the misconception that Jesus said to "forgive your enemy" or to forgive unrepentant offenders 70 x 7 rather than to love them. Some of the differences between love and forgiveness are listed below.*

## 8 Myths of Forgiveness (out of 25)

1. **Myth: Holding on to unforgiveness in your heart will make you angry and bitter.**  
**Truth: Holding on to unforgiveness in your heart can NEVER make you angry or bitter** because you are already bitter from the moment you get hurt. Unforgiveness cannot and does not ever lead you there. You are ALREADY there.
2. **Myth: Forgiveness is as much for you as it is for your offender because "Forgiveness" is defined as: releasing oneself (letting go) of anger or revenge**  
**Truth: Biblical Forgiveness is NEVER for you and it NEVER means "letting go of anger and bitterness"**
3. **Myth: Forgiveness is the conduit through which we release anger and bitterness.**  
**Truth: Meekness is the conduit through which we release anger and bitterness.**
4. **Myth: You must aphiemi/forgive all offenders 70 x 7 (Matthew 18:22).**  
**Truth: Jesus commanded that we aphiemi/forgive ONLY repentant offenders.**
5. **Myth: If you do not forgive all offenders, God will not forgive you.**  
**Truth: This is a lie and stupid concept. God does not forgive all offenders. He only forgives those enemies who come to Him in repentance, acknowledging sin, and begging for removal of sin.**
6. **Myth: Forgiveness does not mean that an offender is no longer guilty, accountable, or that we must be reconciled.**

**Truth:** Yes it does. Those things are exactly what Biblical forgiveness DOES mean.

7. **Myth:** It is never wrong to forgive. Forgiveness should never be considered a sin.

**Truth:** Disobedience to God's clear command is always a sin. Jesus never says to first forgive an unrepentant brother of his sin but to:

- A. Rebuke him
- B. Treat him "like a heathen" if he remains unrepentant,

*If we skip or fail to do either, we are unloving and sinning against Jesus' command.*

8. **Myth:** Jesus forgave His enemies on the Cross.

**Truth:** Jesus prayed for His enemies not because He was forgiving them, but because He could not forgive their sin.

Jesus *offered forgiveness* of sin to one thief and He invited him to Paradise. But Jesus *did not request forgiveness* for him.

Jesus *requested forgiveness* of sin for the Roman Soldiers, but Jesus *did not offer forgiveness* to them; He did not speak to them, He did not invite them to Paradise, He did not reconcile with them, He did not save them nor justify them. He prayed for them because, as He taught, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: John 6:44

## 10 Problems with teaching unbiblical forgiveness concepts

1. *Rather than actually ridding of bitterness, victims tend to push their resentment deep inside their souls. Hidden, it continues to simmer, manifesting itself in inner personal conflicts as well as conflicts with others.*
2. *Many people go to their graves not knowing why they are frustrated with "trying to forgive" in a way which God never does.*
3. *Many have unwisely put themselves in harm's way and have been hurt or killed because they were falsely taught that they had to forgive their abusers 70 x 7.*
4. *We disobey God by "forgiving" our enemy for our own peace, letting the offender go, and moving on with our life. Thus, we can ignore our enemy rather than obey Jesus and love our enemy.*
5. *Offenders often DEMAND forgiveness rather than begging or humbly asking for forgiveness.*
6. *An offender may be asking for permission to sin or that his victims "not be angry with me." An offender will often accuse victims of unchristian behavior if they try to hold him accountable for his sin.*
7. *If we "forgive" an unrepentant offender, in actuality we are arrogantly accusing him/her of sin before they are willing to accept responsibility for their sin. Result: the offender may express even more hatred toward the victim.*
8. *Churches often split because they have not been taught the differences between *aphiemil*/forgiveness and *charizomai*/forgiveness.*
9. *We have replaced true love with tolerance of evil*
10. *We have replaced humble confrontation with pushed down, hidden anger and false forgiveness.*

<b>Love vs. Forgiveness Chart</b>			
		<i>Love</i>	<i>Forgiveness</i>
<b>A</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	Love holds people accountable.  <i>(Matthew 18:15-17, Luke 17:3-4)</i>	Forgiveness is the end of accountability  <i>(Jer. 31:34, Rom 8:1, Acts 3:18-19, 1 John 1:7)</i>
<b>B</b>	<b>Punishment and Discipline</b>	Love, at times, will not forgive but will rebuke, reprove, and discipline for wrong doing (i.e., parent to child, boss firing employee, etc.)  <i>Hebrews 12:7-11, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, Romans 16:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:14, Titus 3:10</i>	Forgiveness means punishment and discipline are no longer due.  <i>John 3:17-20, Acts 3:19, Rom. 5:1, Romans 8:1, Rev. 1:5</i>
<b>C</b>	<b>Freedom</b>	Love and meekness are how one frees himself from anger and bitterness.  <i>Matthew 11:29, Luke 6:27-36, Hebrews 12:15</i>	Aphiemi/Forgiveness is how our enemy is freed from his burden of debt  <i>Luke 7:47, Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 18:32</i>
<b>D</b>	<b>Benefit</b>	Love and meekness benefit me and everyone around me.  <i>1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Matthew 5:43-46</i>	Aphiemi/Forgiveness of sin is only for the benefit of a repentant offender.  <i>Acts 3:19, Psalm 86:5, Ezekiel 18:30-32, Luke 17:3-4</i>
<b>E</b>	<b>The Fruit of the Spirit</b>	Love and meekness ARE fruits of the Spirit.  <i>Galatians 5:22-23</i>	Forgiveness IS NOT a fruit of the Spirit.  <i>Galatians 5:22-23</i>
<b>F</b>	<b>Reconciliation</b>	Love DESIRES to be reconciled  <i>Galatians 6:1, Mark 10:20-22, Matthew 23:37</i>	Forgiveness IS to be reconciled  <i>2 Cor. 5:16-19, Luke 15:1-32</i>



## Part II: Overcoming Anger and Bitterness Before Forgiveness

The best way to begin overcoming anger and bitterness is to first understand the difference between grieving and mourning.

**Definition of Grieving:** focusing on the emotional pain of personal loss.

**Definition of Mourning** can also be used to describe emotional pain or loss.

### The Biblical definition and differences between Grieving and Mourning:

Grieving becomes mourning simply by adding one element: Faith (or trust) in God.

#### Grief + Faith = Mourning

The most striking thing in the Bible is this: there are *no promises* associated with grieving. However, there are *many promises* for those who mourn. There are promises of dancing, gladness, singing, hope, joy, shouting, praising, and comfort! Psalm 30:11-12, Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Psalm 62:8, Psalm 138:6, Isaiah 61:1-3, Isaiah 51:11, Isaiah 57:15, 18-19, Matthew 5:4, 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, 2 Corin.7:10, James 4:6-10,

### Must we always mourn?

No! The simple formula is this: The degree to which you are bitter is the degree to which you must mourn to God. If there is no bitterness, then no mourning is necessary.

### Why is it so important to mourn when we are deeply hurt?

Mourning requires trusting God in the midst of your pain and sorrow. This is what enables you to be meek. Jesus said, not only will the meek (those whose strength and power is in God alone) inherit the earth, but it is only through MEEKNESS, NEVER FORGIVENESS, that we can rid of anger. It is through meekness that we can be at peace and find rest for our souls.

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30*

### A Misunderstood Concept: "Forgiving allowed me to get rid of anger and bitterness."

If we define forgiveness as: "*to get rid of or release ourselves from anger and bitterness,*" then what we are really saying is:

*Getting rid of anger and bitterness is what allowed me to get rid of anger and bitterness or I overcame anger and bitterness by releasing myself from anger and bitterness.*

Biblically, the most effective way to rid of the gorilla of anger and bitterness is never through forgiveness, but when we:

1. Turn to God (**Psalm 62:8**)
2. Mourn to God (**Matthew 5:4**)
3. Trust God's promise to repay (**Romans 12:19**)
4. Trust God to use the evil to somehow mold us and bless us (**Romans 8:28**)
5. Learn to be meek (not angry, bitter, vengeful) as Jesus taught (**Matt. 11:28-30**)
6. Love our enemy (if nothing else, pray for God's mercy) (**Matthew 5:44**)
7. Rejoice in God's ability to use us to comfort others (**2 Corinthians 1:3-5**)
8. Turn our anger into motivation to do good for others (i.e., Jesus' righteous anger at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees motivated him: to heal the paralytic (**Mark 2:1-12**) and the man

with the withered hand (**Mark 3:1-6**). The murder of John Walsh's six year old son motivated him to start *America's Most Wanted*).

*See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled. Hebrews 12:14-15*

**Bitterness does not come from failing to respond correctly to our enemy, but from failing to respond humbly and meekly to the grace of God when we are hurt. When we respond correctly to God's grace with faith, then we will respond correctly in love toward our offender.**

Our ultimate goal is to forgive only as God forgives. God never forgives (aphiemi) the sins of the unrepentant. Like God, we can only remove the sorrow and guilt from those who want their guilt removed. But we are also to love as God loves, and that is unconditionally. There is no need to ever harbor resentment or bitterness or thoughts of our own vengeance. As Jesus commanded, we are to love even our unrepentant enemies.