

Pray More Healing Retreat - Transcript

Forgiving God, Others and Yourself

Jeannie Ewing

Hi everyone, and welcome again to the Pray More Novenas Online Healing Retreat. My name's Jeannie Ewing, and I'm going to be talking to you today about forgiving God, others, and yourself. Let's begin with prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord God, You sent Your only Son to show us the way of true love: forgiveness. Forgiveness is what makes us Christian. It's what abolishes the old law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. We know that we're not supposed to seek retaliation, we're not even really supposed to seek our own justice, but wait for Your justice, and that's hard to do when we're wounded. When we need to be healed, we want to make things right now, we want them to become whole again now. Please restore the ability, the desire first to forgive, and then the ability. We thank You so much for Your grace. Help us to cooperate with it today. In Your most holy name we pray. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So, I want to start with forgiving God. You might even think "Well, that's kind of a weird thing to say," or "Is that even a thing?" But let's think about times... I would like you to also... I'm inviting you to think about a time or times in your life, maybe right now, where you have been mad at God. Just admit it. In one of my earlier talks about dealing with the dark emotions, I mentioned how I was in a really dark place after my daughter Sarah was born. And if I'm going to be honest with you, there have been many times in my life since that moment when I have been mad at God, even recently. Sometimes it just comes out of nowhere, like this wave that crashes on my heart and comes to my consciousness, and I'm just overwhelmed with this... this sense of "Why God? Why? Why are You doing this?" Or "Why are You allowing this?"

So, anger at God is normal. We need to forgive God. I think we need to understand what forgiveness is and what it means, and I think that we need to remember that anger at God is okay as long as we're still praying to Him. So understanding God's permissive and perfect will for us is important when we're mad at God. Something I struggle with all the time is feeling like God's punishing me because there is one catastrophe or disaster or crisis after another, it seems. These go in seasons and in fits, but by and large that's what it feels like. "Why God? Why are You doing this again?" Or "Why are You allowing this?"

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So God's permissive will is different than His perfect will. His perfect will is, of course, all the good, all the good. God never created suffering, or evil, or death. That was not part of His plan. He permits it. And why? Because free will is such an incredible and powerful gift. It's the most important gift of love that God has given to His creation, including the intelligent... especially the intelligent beings I should say. Not all of creation, but the angels and humanity. And because we have this incredible gift of free will, the best gift of love God could give us, sometimes we choose to rebel. And because sin exists, because of the First Fall, we have suffering.

So we have God's permissive will, which means He allows the catastrophes and crises and trials of life for a reason. It's not that whole cliché of everything happens for a reason, though there is truth in that; it's more like nothing passes through God's hand without His knowledge. Nothing happens to us without first passing through God's hand. So we have to remember that when we're mad at Him. He already knew we were going to get mad at Him, He knew we were going to yell at Him. It's kind of like throwing a tantrum as a child to your parent.

So we have to remember these metaphors and allow ourselves to get mad. It's okay to yell at God, it's okay to tell Him we don't like what's going on in our life, we don't understand it. But we have to remember we don't always understand God. When we're mad at Him, we don't understand Him. We don't know what He's doing, we don't know why. Maybe He's silent, maybe we've been afflicted with a really heavy cross; the healing we've sought has not come, and that's hard.

Forgiving God, I think, in this sense just means that we... we get mad, but then, like we would do in any relationship, we say we're sorry, we say "I love You," we say "I understand that I don't understand." And just leave it at that, and that's okay.

Forgiving others. So this is a topic that a lot of people exhaust, and I want to... I'm hopefully going to give you some pointers and tips that are different. This is something... this is an actual process that has really been powerful in my own life. It has helped me move through my own pain and sense of betrayal. First of all, I want to quote Father Chad Ripperger. He said in one of his talks on I think it was either the spiritual or the psychological wounds and healing in those wounds, that if you have experienced a lot of betrayal and hurt and woundedness in your life, it's a sign that God wants you to excel in clemency and charity. God wants you excel in charity and clemency. So remember that.

Forgiving others. Wow. Okay, this is an exercise that you can actually do at home. Maybe you can look at this video again if it's hard for you to remember these steps in just a short amount of time. But this is something I personally have done, it's an

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ongoing process, and it's been very helpful for me. First, get out of a piece of paper or a notebook. I want you to bring this to prayer, okay. So when you go to prayer the next time, I want you to ask the Lord to show you all the people you need to forgive. It's so fascinating, because you're always going to remember the people closest to you now, right. If you're married, that is going to be your family, your immediate family. Obviously your family of origin. You have to really write down everybody in your family of origin, because we've all been hurt by our parents and our siblings. And then you're going to be surprised at some of the other people who come to mind.

I know, for me, I've written down probably a hundred names or more, and they don't all come to me at once, and it's not going to all happen in one day, so you're going to have to repeat this exercise. But as you pray, ask God to give you these names, and then write them in your prayer journey, okay. When you can't think of any more, just stop. Then you need to take... this is part of your prayer, okay. So then you're going to take one or two of those names, and you're going to write out what they did to you. What was the offence? Maybe there's more than one. What was the story? It doesn't have to be long and detailed, but just write out what it was specifically that hurt you that you haven't forgiven.

Then you need to pray after you write this, and you're going to read what you wrote and you're going to pray that God will help you to have the desire to forgive that person. This is the prayer that you pray afterwards: "Heavenly Father, I now ask for Your help in forgiving all the people on my list. Although I may still be hurt and angry with them, I know that they are Your children, and that You love them more than I could possibly know. For this reason, my God, I ask You to help me to truly forgive them. I lay down all bitterness, resentment, and hatred for these people, and I freely choose to forgive them. Teach me to be more merciful, my God, and help me to always be willing, just as You are always willing, to forgive those who sin against me. Amen."

Now, after you do this, you're going to, like I said, you're going to repeat this. It might take you several months to go through this exercise, over and over, where you go back to your prayer every morning or every evening and you sit with the Lord and say "Lord, please show me who I need to forgive." And you write the names, and you write a couple of things about what they did to hurt you, and then you pray that prayer.

It's very powerful. Something that you might not know or might not think about is that forgiveness isn't... it doesn't come naturally to any of us. It's an act of the will, it's a decision. So forgiveness is actually part of charity. It's part of the virtue of charity. It doesn't mean someone deserves our forgiveness, it doesn't mean that we

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forget about what they did, it doesn't mean they get a pass. So what we're doing when we forgive is actually participating in Divine Mercy. That means that any time I've offended someone, or you've offended someone, we don't deserve to be forgiven, but yet God forgives us because He loves us. That's Divine Mercy. And if we are to be reflections of God and His mercy, we have to be willing to do what Father Ripperger said: to excel in charity and clemency. Clemency is another word for forgiveness, right. So there is a generosity of our spirit that opens up when there's a willingness to forgive. A willingness.

So it begins as an act of the will, it's a choice, just like lobbying is a choice, charity is a choice. It's not something that we're going to necessarily feel the fuzzies, okay. I think we also have to remember there are oftentimes spiritual bonds or strongholds that can be tangled or entangled in the wound caused by someone else. Forgiveness brings freedom when those bonds are broken, those chains are broken. That's going to take time. So if you have the courage today to start that exercise, where you write out the names of people when you're in prayer, if that's scary for you go to Adoration. Talk to your pastor, talk to your spiritual director, talk to your spouse or a trusted friend. But this really has to be done between you and God, that's really where it comes down. And you're going to do this out of the desire to forgive, the willingness to forgive.

It's hard, and it goes against our natural inclination for vengeance and retaliation, because of our sense of justice, doesn't it? But I think about that scripture: ***The rain falls on the just and the unjust.*** I think that's in the Old Testament. In other words, you think about how the sun shines and the rain falls on everybody. It doesn't discriminate. God loves the person who offended you perfectly, just like He loves you perfectly. So we have to look at our own weaknesses and our own sins and the times that we have hurt others to give us a little bit of perspective and to give us a dose of humility, as we enter this exercise of writing down the names, writing down the offence, praying the prayer, and then repeating this process over and over. Like I said, it's going to take time, and it also will be probably draining. It's important to combine this activity or this exercise with reconciliation and the Eucharist. I think Adoration would also help to do that.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of someone else's sin. Forgiveness is costly. You pay the price of the evil we forgive. Isn't that powerful to think about? We pay the price of the evil we forgive. So, in essence, we're taking on that suffering or that cross willingly, like Jesus took our sin upon Himself on the cross and freed us from it. So we also have to remember that forgiveness means we're not using the past against the person who hurt us, and that means yourself too. So when you are trying to forgive yourself, if you're including yourself on this list of names, it's important to write down the things that you find

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it hard to overlook or to overcome I guess when it comes to the guilt and the shame that you feel. If this is guilt because of an unconfessed sin, run to confession. Do it. If it this is something that you're ruminating over, a sin that you've confessed already, you need to forgive yourself. And that's another hardship, or another piece of the puzzle for healing too. It's a hard piece of the puzzle for healing.

So we're not holding the past against the offender, whether it's yourself or someone else. Don't you think that a lot of times, when we are really in the thick and the throes of our suffering and our brokenness it's becomes we are dwelling on the past? We're living in another place and time that's not the present moment. It's not now. It's something that already happened, and we can't let go of it. So forgiveness is only freedom, it's only liberating when we don't hold the past against ourselves or someone else. It's between you and God alone.

So, like I said, if you're scared to engage in this exercise with... or by yourself I mean, you can begin with someone you trust, a close person, by saying "I don't know how to do this, this is too hard." Maybe you experienced really, really hard trauma in your past. But ultimately, the forgiveness in your heart that transforms you, that heals you is only between you and God. It can't be between anybody else.

I want to end now with a prayer for inner healing that, again, I think is something that you might want to think about praying every day or often, when you are doing this forgiveness work I would say. This is something, again, a prayer that has been overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly powerful in my journey for forgiveness. Healing is... It's a long process. It's not a Band-Aid. It's really digging deep in the wound and saying "Lord, I give You my wounds, I'm going to hide them in Your wounds, and I ask You to cover me with Your precious blood." And you will find that relief and that freedom, and you will find those chains are broken over time. So don't give up. Here's that prayer for inner healing.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord Jesus, You came to heal our wounded and troubled hearts. I beg You to heal the torments that cause anxiety in my heart; I beg You, in a particular way, to heal all who are the cause of sin. I beg You to come into my life and heal me of the psychological harms that struck me in my early years, and from the injuries that they have caused through my life. Lord Jesus, You know my burdens. I lay them all on Your Good Shepherd's Heart. I beseech You - by the merits of the great, open wound in Your heart - to heal the small wounds that are in mine. Heal the pain in my memories, so that nothing that has happened to me will cause me to remain in pain and anguish, filled with anxiety.

Heal, O Lord, all those wounds that have been the cause of all the evil that is rooted in my life. I want to forgive all those who have offended me. Look to those

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inner sores that make me unable to forgive. You who came to forgive the afflicted of heart, please, heal my own heart. Heal, my Lord Jesus, those intimate wounds that cause me physical illness. I offer You my heart. Accept it, Lord, purify it, and give me the sentiments of Your Divine Heart. Help me to be meek and humble.

Heal me, O Lord, from the pain caused by the death of my loved ones, which is oppressing me. Grant me to regain peace and joy in the knowledge that You are the Resurrection and the Life. Make me an authentic witness to Your Resurrection, Your victory over sin and death, Your living presence among us. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

That prayer, by the way, was from the *Deliverance Prayers: For the Laity* book, and that is compiled by Father Chad Ripperger, and you can find it on Amazon. Thanks again for joining me. I'll see you next time.