

## Pray More Healing Retreat 2020 - Transcript

### God's Secret Weapon for Healing, Forgiveness

**Dr. Mary Healy**

Hi, I'm Dr. Mary Healy. And in this second part of our online healing retreat, I'm going to be talking about God's secret weapon for healing, namely forgiveness. Let's pray. *In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Lord Jesus, you taught us to pray. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lord, we sometimes find it so difficult to forgive those who have offended us. Only by your grace is it possible. And so, Lord, we ask you for your divine power from heaven, to transform our hearts, so that we might both receive your absolutely free unconditional gift of forgiveness and we might also pass on that forgiveness to others. We pray this in your holy name, Amen. Mary, star of Evangelization, pray for us. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Jesus says to His disciples in Mark 11:25, ***"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."*** So Jesus is saying there that, if we want our prayers to be heard, an absolutely essential condition is that we forgive anyone who has offended us in any way. Now in all of my experience in healing ministry, praying with people, hundreds, even thousands of people for healing, I have found and I know others have also found, that one of the most common obstacles to a person being healed is unforgiveness. If they're holding on to a resentment for some hurt from the past, it hinders the healing power of Christ. Conversely, when a person chooses to forgive and let go of that offense, it often opens the floodgates to the Lord's healing.

I want to just give you one example. I prayed over a woman who asked me for prayer for a hemorrhage and she told me she had had this hemorrhage for two years, and that it was so serious that she needed constant medication, even though the medication had bad side effects and carried a risk of stroke. And she tried twice to go off the medication and it landed her in the hospital, one time she almost died. So this was a serious condition. And as I began to pray with a couple of other people, I felt led to ask her, "Did anything painful happen in your life around the time that this began?" And almost immediately, she said, "Well, yeah, that was the time when my husband stopped going to church." And I could see that that was very painful for her, that her husband had abdicated his spiritual leadership in the family and no longer supported her in raising their children in the faith. So I said,

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"Well, have you forgiven him?" And at that point she kind of rolled her eyes and she said, "Well, I've tried." So I could see she hadn't fully forgiven him. And I explained to her what forgiveness is because it's very important for people to understand what it is and isn't. I said forgiveness doesn't mean minimizing the offense, it doesn't mean saying, "oh well, it's no big deal, I know he meant well, she meant well." Because maybe they didn't mean well and maybe it was a big deal.

So forgiveness is not sweeping it under the rug. Rather, to forgive is to say, "I give up my right to hold it against that person. I let God be the judge of that person because God judges with perfect justice and perfect mercy. I let go of my right to hold it against them." So I asked her, "Are you willing to do that for your husband?" She said, "Okay." And so I let her in a very simple prayer, just forgiving her husband from the heart. And by the way, when you pray this prayer, your emotions may or may not immediately follow, but what counts for the Lord is the act of the will. You make the decision of the will, you can't choose your emotions, you can't always control them, but you can make an act of the will and the Lord will do that in you, He will give you that grace. And as you do that, you may have to repeat it maybe a number of times, eventually the emotions will fall into line.

So anyway, she prayed a prayer very sincerely, forgiving her husband. And then I and the other people prayed over her for healing of this hemorrhage. And 11 days later, I got an email from her. By the way, she copied a whole bunch of people who hadn't even known about the hemorrhage because she wanted to give glory to God for what happened. And she said, "When you all left, I stayed in the chapel and I felt like I had been healed." And she said, "I looked up at the crucifix and I said... And she said, you have to understand, I am a skeptic, I'm not into this kind of thing. But I looked up at the crucifix and I said, 'Jesus, did you heal me?' And he nodded." And she said, "since that day, no more hemorrhage, completely healed." Several months later, she wrote and told me that her relationship with her husband was also improving. So the Lord was doing both a physical and a relational healing in her.

Jesus has some very strong things to say about forgiveness in the Gospel. One time, Peter came and asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Now, Peter probably thought that he was making a fairly generous offer there. In his day, some rabbis taught that three times is really a sufficient cap on forgiveness, like if the person commits the sin a fourth time, forget it, you don't need to forgive anymore. So Peter was more than doubling that. But to his surprise, Jesus said, "**No, not seven times, but 70 times**

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*seven times.*" Or some translations read, 70, seven times. But the point is, what the Lord asks of us is unlimited forgiveness.

And it's interesting because in the book of Genesis, there's a brief account of a man named Lamech, who boasts that for anybody who offends him, he will be avenged 77 fold. So Lamech represents absolutely unlimited retaliation. And Jesus says, ***"I want you, my followers, to stand for unlimited forgiveness."*** And then he tells a parable to explain what he means. And he says there was a servant who owed his king 10,000 talents. Now the king in the parable, as usual, represents God. And the servant stands for any one of us, we are God's servants. But he owed this King 10,000 talents. Now that debt represents our sin. But we have to actually get a picture of just how much this actually means.

Now, in the ancient Jewish world, a talent was 6,000-days wages. Now for us, in the United States, if we take the minimum wage, roughly \$11 an hour, a day's wage is about \$88. Therefore one talent, 6000-days wages, is over \$500,000, that's half a lifetime of wages or more. But this guy doesn't owe just one talent, he owes 10,000 talents. So his debt is more than \$5 billion, it's absolutely astronomical. Jesus is trying to shock his listeners into recognizing the weight of our sin, the magnitude of our debt to God. And what happens?

Well, as was common in that culture, his lord ordered that he be sold and all his family be sold, his property liquidated. That was the common practice back then. And then this poor guy gets on his knees and he says, "lord, have patience with me and I will pay you everything." Now, once you've realized just how big his debt is, you realize, well, that promise is absolutely absurd, it's preposterous, there's no way in his entire lifetime or many lifetimes that he's ever going to repay that debt. You wonder how in the world did he racked up such a debt. But there's no way he can ever pay it back. And yet, look at the king's response. He was moved with compassion. It's the same word used of Jesus with the leper who came to him. He had a gut-wrenching visceral reaction of compassion. And the king released him and forgave the debt. He said, You know what? Just forget it. Just write off the debt. Don't even think about it anymore. You don't need to pay me back. It's done. Just imagine the relief of that weight being lifted off you.

Well, that servant goes out and immediately he runs into a fellow servant who owes him 100-days wages. So now we're talking about roughly \$6,000. That represents the debt we owe one another because of sin. Now, it's not pocket change, it's not a negligible amount, it's \$6,000, it's significant. But it doesn't compare to the 5 billion that this man has just been forgiven. And the fellow servant, after the guy demands that he be repaid the fellow servant begs him,

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please just give me time and I'll pay you back. Now, that's exactly what the first servant had said. But in this case, it's realistic. You could eventually pay back the \$6,000. But what does he do instead? He refuses, he chokes him, he gets him thrown into prison. Well, understandably, when the other servants hear about it, they're horrified and they let the king know. And when he hears that, he calls the servant and he says, "You wicked servant. I forgave you that massive debt, and should you not have forgiven your fellow servant?" And he handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

Now, truly, unforgiveness does lead to torture, I've seen that in people's lives. And inner torment for those who refuse to let go of an offense. And we even run the risk of an eternal torment if we end this life without forgiving those who have sinned against us. But here's what I think is the key to the parable that Jesus is teaching us here. One who refuses to forgive others, has actually never fully accepted the awesome magnitude of God's forgiveness of us. And I think the reason that people have a hard time accepting God's forgiveness is because it takes a certain humility. I think the servant of the parable really deep down, he wanted to still somehow payback that astronomical debt. He didn't want to be that indebted to the generosity of the king. He wanted to be able to say, I did it myself. And therefore he didn't receive the king's forgiveness. And therefore, wanting to pay back that whole debt, he needed every penny he could get, and that's why he demanded it from his fellow servant. And likewise, when we are not willing to freely receive God's gift of forgiveness, we have to hold on to being right, we have to hold on to our anger, we have to hold on to our resentment. But when we freely receive what God has so freely given us, then there's enough to give away, it overflows. We can live a lifestyle of forgiveness, not walking around, being offended by people and holding on to various hurts and bitterness and anger that comes from the sins that others have committed against us.

Forgiveness is incredibly powerful and in a way, it's the first step to healing. A story that so beautifully illustrates the power of forgiveness is a story about the mother of a saint, Saint Maria Goretti. If you know the story of Maria Goretti, she was the oldest child of her mother. Her father had died, they were extremely poor, they had to move in with another family. Maria took care of her younger siblings while her mother went out and worked in the fields. But a young man in the family they lived with continually made advances on Maria, this young girl, and when she refused him, one day he finally became violent and he stabbed her 14 times. Maria died in pain days later, but only after saying as her last words, "I forgive Alessandro." She died with forgiveness in her heart.

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Well, the rest of the story is that her mother, Assunta, because she no longer had Maria to take care of her young younger siblings, actually had to put up all her other children for adoption. So imagine she not only had the pain of losing her oldest daughter, beloved Maria, but all her children as well. How easy it would have been for her to become a bitter woman. Well meanwhile, Alessandro who had murdered Maria went to prison. He was a hard and vicious man, he had to be in solitary confinement. Until one day, Maria came to him in a dream. And she offered him 14 white lilies, one for every stab wound. And she told him, "Alessandro, I forgive you." From that time on, he was a changed man. He became like a marshmallow. He became a gentle and loving person.

Twenty years later, he got out of prison. And on Christmas Eve, he came to the house of Assunta, Maria's mother, and he knocked on the door. She answered the door and he said, "Assunta, do you know who I am?" She said, "Yes, Alessandro, I know who you are." He said, "Would you ever forgive me?" And she said, "Alessandro, God has forgiven you and Maria has forgiven you. How could I not forgive you?" And together that evening, they went to Christmas Eve mass. Before the whole congregation, he confessed what he had done. It was already known but he repented before the whole church and asked their forgiveness. Together, Assunta and Alessandro attended the canonization of St. Maria Goretti.

Forgiveness has such enormous power. Now, that's a really huge thing to forgive, but also it can apply to smaller things. One time, I was giving a retreat and I talked about this parable that I just talked to you about. And everyone then had a time of prayer to go and be with the Lord. And afterward, one of the women came and she shared, she said, "I've been married for about 25 years, and I really love my husband. But for the last 10 years, it's like there's been a wall between us. And it really bothers me. It's like we're not one the way we used to be. And I didn't know why." But she said, "Today when I went to pray, the Lord showed me five specific things that I was holding against him, that I hadn't forgiven him for, and I wasn't even aware of." And she said, "I went through them one by one, and I completely forgave him." She said, "Now I realize, that wall, it wasn't him, it was me. And now it's gone and I can't wait to go home to my husband." Isn't that beautiful?

And then another time, I was giving a healing service and we were praying for physical healings. And I felt like the Lord said, there's somebody here, who when they were in third grade, their teacher humiliated them in front of the class. And they just felt so ashamed, they wanted to sink into the floor. And God is asking that person, will you forgive that teacher? Well, so I gave that word, I lead people into prayer of forgiveness. And afterward, a woman came to the front and she said, "When you said that, you could have blown me over, knocked me over with a

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feather." She said, "That was me, it was my third grade teacher. And I never really thought to forgive her, but tonight I forgave her. And I feel so free." Well, then a second person got up, a man stood up. He said, "That was me, my third grade teacher and I also forgave." And then a third person came up and said, "It was me too, well, it was my sixth grade teacher." So in each of those people, the Lord did a powerful work in their hearts. Letting go of something that they maybe even hadn't thought about in years but that had been in some way blocking them from the grace of God.

One more story I'll tell is, I taught about this parable in a class when we were talking about the Synoptic Gospels. And one of the students was a religious sister from Africa. And little did I know that as she was listening to this teaching about the parable, she was really struggling interiorly, and later she told me why. She said, "During the Liberian Civil War, my country, a rebel slaughtered my two uncles and my brother. And I never had the opportunity to tell them how much I was hurt and pained by that action. But I decided never to forgive him and he's passed away now. But today through that parable, God told me to forgive him and I did." And she was radiant. It was like she had a whole new whole life because God had done this work of forgiveness in her.

So I want to invite you to join in this simple prayer of forgiveness. Just repeat these words in your heart after me. *Heavenly Father, I choose today to forgive. (And now in your heart, name the person specifically whom you are forgiving and what you're forgiving them for.) And I forgive anyone who has betrayed me, hurt me or offended me. I give them a free gift of my forgiveness. Maybe they don't deserve it, Lord, but I didn't deserve your forgiveness either. They owe me nothing. I let that debt go to the foot of the cross. And I ask you Lord, to bless that person and lead them to eternal life. And Lord, where I have judged that person, in hurt and pain and bitterness, I acknowledge that as my sin and I repent. And I ask you Lord, to cleanse me from anything that would still be holding on. I put the cross of Jesus between me and any sowing and reaping that's going on in my life. It stops today. Thank you Lord. In Jesus's name, Amen.*